Bernhard Kaiser

THE TRINITARIAN AND CHRISTOLOGICAL CREED OF THE CHURCH:

GREEK PHILOSOPHY OR BIBLICAL TRUTH?

With this topic we enter a difficult terrain. Firstly, this lies in the nature of things, because it is about the presence of God in the form of the man Jesus of Nazareth. As we know, it is hard to "nail down" God and to situate him in the world of perception. But this is precisely what has happened in Christ. Christ appeared in the flesh. God was, as Scripture says, in Christ, and thus gave himself a recognizable figure, a face, by which we shall know him. Hence the christological task to describe Christ. But if we ask how divinity and humanity in Christ come together, there are, as we shall see, several traps which we have to avoid stepping into. It is the difficulty of thinking together divinity and humanity, and that is at close consideration a difficult task.

One fallacy is speculation. We try to think of the deity and use terms for it which have no objective reference for us, about which we do not know or cannot know, at least when we talk about God or otherworldly or invisible things. Here I refer to concepts such as infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, immortal or immutable. Another fallacy is that of logic. When we try our logic that is part of our fallen sinful reality and not a divine light, it may be that we come to logically plausible, but false statements in light of the Bible. A third fallacy I see in a philosophical concept of God, that is an idea of God that does not come from Holy Scripture, but from the self-empowered human thinking itself. I am focusing in my presentation especially on the latter fallacy.

It is advisable for factual and theological reasons to start with a consideration of the biblical witness to Christ. This will be done in the first part of my presentation. In the second part we will deal with the church-historical, respectively, the consequence regarding the history of doctrine about the deity of Christ. The Early Church could not help but ask the questions of the Greek thinking world, in whose midst it expanded. She needed to reply to it and has done so at the Council of Nicaea in 325, and the same again at the Council of Constantinople in 381 which is known to us as the Nicene Creed. Having thus been clarified as official church doctrine and being in principle in accordance with Holy Scripture, that Jesus Christ was God, the question had to be answered, how his deity should be related to his humanity which in itself was very clear. This happened at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The terms used in the two councils I would like to discuss in the second and third part of my presentation. Finally, I give a biblical evaluation of the views.

1. The Starting Point: The Biblical Witness

Before the encounter of the Christian Church with the Greco-Roman culture, there was the apostolic proclamation, which is transmitted to us in the New Testament. This in turn was and is closely connected with the Old Testament, and both together constitute the Bible, the authoritative Word of God. Undoubtedly the thought of the Bible is different from Greek thought. Biblical is the continuous reference to the created reality. The protagonists of the Bible are not mythological figures, not demigods, whose sagas would be included in the Bible, but they are normal people with family tree or pedigree, people who have lived on the same earth as we have. Accordingly, the actions in the Bible are very human. It is significant that the Bible does not offer any speculation about Gnostic aeons, not an abstract philosophy with interesting but meaningless speculations and no religious advice on how one could manage one's piety best, but it speaks of that which, as John says, "we have seen and heard" (1 John 1:3), of things that really happened, of a person who had hands and feet, of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we find it not too difficult to recognize Jesus Christ as a human being.

The bodily-immanent dimension of the Christian faith in itself is scandalous for the Greeks. When Paul preached to the Athenians the resurrection from the dead, they reacted typically Greek: That was the last thing that was in their horizon of expectations. They wanted especially the salvation from the body, the liberation from the shackles of the material. They would have been open for a new philosophical doctrine. They would have discussed this with the Jew and former Pharisee Paul. But what he proposed was out of the question for them. Paul, however, did not try to adapt the content of his proclamation to the expectations of his audience. Moreover, he announced to the Greeks the crucified Christ, knowing that the information that a Jew was crucified to be the Saviour of the world, seemed to the Greeks as a plain stupidity. No wonder then, that many made fun of Paul. But it was a miracle that God gave it anyway that Greeks came to faith in Christ.

The Bible makes the following statements regarding the divinity of Christ:

(1) The Virgin Birth

It results from the annunciation of the birth of Jesus to Mary reported in Luke 1:26-38 and from Jesus' birth reported in Matthew 1:18-25, which is described as a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah (7:14). The Bible declares that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, that is, by the third person of the triune God. This provides the factual relationship in talking about the deity, respectively, the divine sonship of Jesus. I would add that the virgin birth did not make Jesus to be the Son of God, but that it reveals the divinity of Jesus in contrast to all other people who are known to be born through the procreation of a man.

The NT presents the virgin birth obviously as a biological fact. To interpret the two texts differently, as historical-critical theology consistently does, means to overlook the physical-creaturely dimension of the biblical account and to make an outdated immanent-causal view of history to be the criterion for what could have happened, and thus what could be true. That God as the creator and in the act of creation is able to act and consequently is capable to create something new is self-evident in the perspective of the Old Testament.

(2) The signs and wonders of Jesus

The deity of Christ was manifested in his

work in that he did signs that pointed to his deity. This also corresponds to God as creator. Examples include the following to be mentioned: The healing of the paralytic (Matthew 9:1-7) followed by the declaration of forgiveness of sins and the proof that Jesus had the authority to forgive sins, therefore he was God. The stilling of the storm follows the astonishment of the disciples: "Who is this man, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (Mt 8:27). After Jesus had walked on the Sea of Galilee, the disciples had to confess: "You are truly the Son of God" (Mt 14:33). John has such signs in mind when he confesses: "... we beheld his glory, a glory as of the only begotten Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14). Added to this is the observation that Jesus was without sin (John 8:46, Heb 4:15), that he rose from the dead (Matthew 28:1-15 and par.; 1Cor 15:3-8 etc.) and finally ascended visibly to heaven (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9-11).

(3) The predication of Jesus as God

The New Testament offers a number of statements that refer to Jesus directly as God: Romans 9:5 ("from which Christ came in the flesh, who is God over all, blessed for ever"), John 1:1 ("and the Word was God"), 1:18 ("No one has ever seen God, the only begotten, who is God and at the Father's side, has made him known"), 1 John 5:20 ("This is the true God and eternal life"). The fact that the Greek NT here uses the ontological terminology, must lead us to the conclusion that Jesus permanently is eternally God, both in the state of humiliation and in the following state of exaltation. About the "being" of God in general we will discuss later, but the terminology is clearly to the effect that with the "is" or "was", a sustained reality is described.

(4) The predication of Jesus as God's Son

The numerous statements of the Gospels that Jesus is the Son of God, will not be cited in detail here (Lk 1:32-35; Mt 11:25-27; Mt 14:33; 16:16-17; 17:5; Mk 15:39; Jn 1:14; Rom 1:3-4; Gal 2:20; 4:4). Jesus himself has confessed to being the Son of God. Thus it is testified that he came from the Father and shares the nature of the Father. The mode of emanation is indeed a mystery. In this respect, the father-son relationship is a picture, an analogy for the way in which the descent of Jesus from the Father is to be imagined. I want to emphasize at the same time that the predication of Jesus as God's Son is not a projection of human religiosity, but that it describes a reality, therefore, that Jesus has really emanated from eternity by the Father, and is beside the Holy Spirit, the second person of the Trinity.

From these statements results the following: The divinity of Jesus became visible in the word and in the works of Jesus. Of the signs and wonders we have already spoken. Peter confessed that Jesus had "words of eternal life" and had inferred from this that Jesus is the "Holy One of God" (Jn 6:68-69) respectively the Son of God (Mt 16:18). The title "Son of God" or "God" has thus a figurative reference and is not only a human opinion that wants to express the uniqueness of Jesus.

2. The Christian and the philosophical concept of God

With the provision that God has revealed himself in Christ, the Christian mission entered into the Greco-Roman world. There were many gods in this world and this world was religious indeed. The pagan polytheism was undoubtedly a sustained challenge to the Christian church, but its challenge was not too substantial. It saw itself as the legitimate heir of the Old Testament, and held fast to the faith in the one God, which linked

her with Judaism. Of course, Judaism did not accept the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, which separated church and synagogue from each other. In addition, there was also a relationship with Greek philosophy, insofar that it criticized the myths that justified the polytheistic world, and tried to establish the world on the basis of a unified principle.

Christian theology was not immune to a dispute with Greek philosophy. Indeed, Paul had said, "See that no one takes you captive through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the powers of the world, and not after Christ" (Col 2:8), and Tertullian said about 150 years later, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem, where is consistency between the academy and the church?"[1] But the questions, which the Greeks asked, demanded an answer, and the answers that the philosophy proposed, were tempting. These are questions that concern us too: What distinguishes the Christian God from Zeus and Jupiter, from Athene and Minerva? In what way does he differ from the God of the philosophers? In what sense is Jesus God? How does his divinity relate to his humanity? The early church was not immune to these issues.

Since the church does not live in a sterile room, soon beliefs invaded into the church that came from the vicinity of the church and could not be harmonized with the apostolic word. There were Jewish beliefs, for example, which claimed that Jesus was only a man, as taught by the Ebionites, but also pagan ideas that emanated from a strict belief in one God and which saw Jesus either as much as God that his humanity was no longer visible; and also the personal difference between him and God the Father was blurred as taught by the Modalists, or as a person who was adopted at his baptism to be the Son of God, as the

Adoptianists taught as well as modern theology. Others saw Jesus only as an intermediate being, as the highest of all created angels as Arius did. His successors offered numerous biblical passages to prove their point of view.

By now it is clear that the church would not be able to respond with mere biblical quotations and reports. It had to formulate a doctrine incorporated in the Bible that summed up what the Bible says about God. In other words, it needed a dogma that in the name of Scripture would mark the border between the right and wrong faith. For this purpose the church formulated for the first time in 325, at the Council of Nicaea in Asia Minor, the first form of the Nicene Creed. It was passed in the form that we know by the Council of Constantinople (381). It formulated the doctrine of the Trinity in the form relevant for the subsequent period. Of the person of Christ it says: *"And in one Lord Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, who is born of the Father before all time, God of God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father, through him all things were created."* With these words, the Church has confessed the full deity of Christ.

Moreover, the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity formulated that God has one nature in three persons: *mia ousia, treis hypostaseis*. Thus, the terms "of one being with the Father" (Greek: *homoousios*) and "*ousia*" that is underlying it, were settled for the Deity, and according to Nicea 381, if Christ was God, his divinity had to be confessed by this term. The term *ousia* had a volatile history. In view of the patristic discussion Kelly says that *ousia* and *hypostasis* were originally synonymous, that one is of platonic, this one of stoic origin. Both mean "real existence or essence." [2] But this also means that the term *ousia* was too vague to confine

it to a particular philosophical direction and its corresponding meaning. Today it means as much as „being", „essence", „reality."

In this process the church has used a term that is not found in the Bible and therefore was controversial among orthodox theologians at first, as the discussions after Nicaea show. Athanasius, for example, adopted the concept only reluctantly, because it was not found in Holy Scripture. But his opponents, the Arians tried to always prove with Bible quotations that Jesus is not the same as God in his nature. In the course of this discussion Athanasius understood that the term *homoousios* (same in nature) emphasizes very well what the Bible teaches, namely, that Jesus is God on the same level as the Father. Thus the concept was recognized as scriptural and added to the confession during the fourth century.

At this point we have to make a longer excursion into Greek philosophy to understand the problems of this term. We notice: the question here is about reality, about what is. The doctrine of being is described by the term „ontology". J. Heinrichs[3] informs: In ontology, the concern is about the basic definition of what is, which it deserves as being there. The ontological question about the origin of being of everything that is there, i.e. all reality, runs through the entire history of Western philosophy (245). He also clarifies that the classical ontology receives its deposition by Kant (246). For Kant, and the modern era, however, speaking of a supreme being-there, is speculative and consequently scientifically untenable.

What was the subject matter in this? One of the early Greek philosophers, who have spoken on this subject, is Parmenides (ca. 540-470). He came from Elea,

a Greek settlement in southern Italy. He developed his ontology by letting the goddess *Dike* determine truth as attributes of being (*to eon*): it is one, unchanging, undifferentiated, motionless, timeless and without relation to anything else. In contrast to this, the *doxa*, the visible world is a world of illusion, to which the attributes of entities do not apply, because the world is not an undifferentiated unity.[4] Although people think that visible things are real, they all have a beginning and an end, and their existence is only an illusion. This is to be distinguished from the being which points toward the Goddess: It is not the being of an easily tangible object, but being itself. This is the object of thought. What makes the idea to be the idea of something, is the being of this "something", for which reason the idea is.

We see from this example that Parmenides tried to legitimize his ontology with ideas that it is being advanced by a goddess. This shows the roots of this perception in ancient paganism. On the other hand, the content is striking that the being is presented as something uniform that has no differentiation. Therefore, it is transcendent and can therefore be represented as immutable and timeless. The visible world that we call creation is only an illusion for him. Thus we have a problem as Christians who think creation-theologically, because reality indeed applies also to creation. It is not pretense or imagination, not an illusion, but it is created by God and therefore positively legitimized.

Another theory of Parmenides is: "The same is thinking and being." "The same is the thought and what we think about, for not without the being, where it is spoken, will you find the thinking." [5] The identity of thinking and being leads to the warning against the sensory experience, the rejection of empiricism and to

the sole recognition of the intellect, of ratio. The ratio, however, abstracts from reality with its multi-faceted individual world of appearance. It makes these freeze in terminology, and thus arrives at its concept of being. Only the general concepts are essential for Parmenides, in contrast to the individual. In the sense of classical ontology, what "is" is, uniformly (indivisible), permanent (forever), immobile. What "is" is conceivable; what "is" not, is not even conceivable. Conversely, what man can think is also real. In this way, Anselm of Canterbury in the Middle Ages came to his ontological proof of God: God is that above which nothing higher can be thought of.

Aristotle has argued that certain individuals (*tode ti*), i.e. the concrete individual, is ontologically fundamental. For this he used the term *ousia* (*substantia*). Ousia is the form that makes a thing into any particular thing.[6] This is based on the Aristotelian view of a possible existence (*dynamis*) and a real being (*energeia*). However, being is imperfect in the world because of the variability of things. Pure being in the sense of pure actuality (*energeia*) is only in the unmoved mover and only in the self-thinking mind. So according to Aristotle *ousia* means the independent being as opposed to the dependent being, the accident, the quality.[7]

Of particular importance for the Western Church became Neoplatonic thought. Well-known representatives are the pagan Plotinus (205-270) and the Christian Origen (185-254). Plotinus' *ousía* is an *aei einai*, eternity, eternal, true being, which is the version of the classic ontology: being as resting in itself, immovable Unum.[8] I present here but the system of Origen. Origen (185-254) was initially a student of Clement of Alexandria and of the last middle-platonist Ammonius Sakkas in Alexandria. He already went with 18 years of age in the footsteps of Clem-

ent in the leadership of the catechetical school (*didaskaleion*) in Alexandria. He is the first to develop a whole system of theology.

In this theological system the Platonic view of the world and of history is of structural importance. Origen advances an *exitus-reditus* scheme that is repeated until all souls are returned to the affirmation of God, that means the occurrence of the *apokatastasis panton*. It is a cosmic drama in three acts.

(1) The starting point of the movement is a monad, an undivided divine unity from which no change or limit can be said, thus it is the eternal, true being. From this, one can not say anything concrete, because once you realize something special in it, it is no longer uniform. From this emanates the Logos. He is consubstantial with the very beginning, and he is the mediator between it and the created world. Through him the spirit is brought to life. Only from this emanates the rest of the created world: the world of angels and spirits, the human souls. They all take part in the nature of God. From the Neoplatonic monism and the corresponding emanational thinking follows a homoousianic, economic doctrine of the Trinity. The system as such requires no Trinity at the beginning; this is instead analogous to the biblical doctrine, but completely integrated into the Neoplatonic scheme of emanation. (2) The original fall happened by the hubris of the highest archangel. He drew angels and human souls into the fall, but was turned down and pushed down according to the intended upturn into the distance from God. In mercy to the fallen sons of light, God creates the world and lets the created spirits live in the air, on the earth or in the underworld, according to their crimes. Creation is the place of testing and purification, comparable to a kind of prison. Here is a typical

Greek evaluation of creation. It is the place of distance from the origin, which must be left again, and because of this, salvation is necessary.

(3) The return of the spirits trapped in creation leads to their reunion with God, the origin. For this purpose the Logos comes down. He incarnates into the pre-existent Jesus, who was the only one not fallen and thus remained in the disembodied state. He leaves the body at the Passion and takes him up again after his descent to Hades. The Logos saves through word and example. Those who join him out of their own free will decision, he leads to salvation through asceticism.

The Neoplatonic basic structure of the system is obvious. The One, the Logos and the Spirit are the three highest levels of existence. In this way, Origen arrives at his Trinity. Neoplatonic is also the evaluation of creation and human existence; sin is in principle only alienation from God, an ontological deficit. Also the soteriology contains Greek aspects. The appreciation of spirituality and the ascetic life are characteristic for this.

The thinking of Origen became formative in the East for the widespread version of the Trinitarian doctrine, while the view of Origen, as such, was not particularly effective, but rather the scheme of emanations or scheme of ascending steps. This did not allow seeing Jesus on the same level of being as the Father. It just went from a monadic concept of God, a supreme, indefinite being in which a Trinity had no place. Arius (d. after 335, presbyter in Alexandria) is considered in this context to be the arch-heretic. God was for him the *agennetos arche* of all things, himself *anarchos*, the only one infinite, without beginning, alone true and indivisible. Therefore, the divine *ousia* cannot be divided. He taught that although all things were created through Jesus, Jesus himself is created as the first and greatest creature before all. Jesus is therefore not co-eternal with the Father. This means, however, that his nature is not like the nature of God. His *ousia* is not like that of his father. Besides Arius there were a number of other parties, who all had their difficulties with the idea of the unity of nature of Father and Son: The Homoiousians who taught that Jesus is similar in nature to the Father, the Homoeans, that he is like him, and the Anhomoeans, that he was unlike him.

In contrast to these views, the Church has used the term *homoousios*. The underlying *ousia*-term is justified by the fact that it is determined by the biblical material contents. We understand it in the sense of "being" and we use it to describe what God "is" as God, what distinguishes him as God from everything else. The Church therefore has adopted, when answering the initially mentioned question, the *ousia*-term known from philosophy, but not clearly determined, in order to designate God regarding his divinity, though with the transformation and clear definition that *ousia* denoted not an abstract, formless being, resting in itself, but that which combined the three persons of the Trinity. At the same time the Early Church adopted the term *hupostasis* to refer to the specifics of the three persons of the Godhead. This term derives from the Neo-Platonic perceptional world: There, hypostasis is what is underneath, what emanated from a superior. But this term could not be accepted with this content of meaning into the dogma of the Trinity, as the three persons of the Godhead do not emanate apart, or even from the divine *ousia*. Rather, *ousia* and *hupostasis* stand on the same level of reality. Hypostasis thus states that the Godhead is only real in the three persons.

Two aspects are relevant for the adoption of this term: (1) God has revealed himself as the Being, the one who is really there. One must, however, not misinterpret the self-revelation of God to Moses, which was, as we know, "I am who I am", or "I will be who I am" (Ex 3:14) in the sense of the ancient doctrine of being. The God of the Bible is not an abstract, undifferentiated and unchangeable being, but he is a creating, acting, fighting and suffering God. He has created all that is there, he is the one "who has made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them" (Ps.146:6). So we have to delimit ourselves against a notion of being that makes *being* to be the ultimate philosophical category, which identifies God with being and sees in God a lack of differentiation, a Unum (neuter!) as postulated by Neoplatonism. But God is person, and this being a person is crucial for the revelation of salvation, not a philosophical category of being. And according to the revelation of salvation, God "is" as a personal God, not as an abstract being, but in concrete, personal reality, where the concept of reality is, of course, not limited to the empirical world as it is.

Since he is really there, the application of the ontological category to propose his reality is not a transmission of human thought forms and forms of proposition toward God. As long as the *ousia* term is kept free from the views of classical ontology and if it includes the active-working element in God, its assumption is justified. Similarly, the ontological predication of Christ as God, like the predication of creaturely things as such, called by God into existence, also Christ is revealed as truly God-being. The predication of being of Jesus as God is rightly a tracing of the already given reality.

(2) It is to be observed, however, that the concept of God thus defined, has led in the entire Occident to the view that God in his being is actually ineffable. While the Church would not want to recognize God only from his revelation, but also gave space to a natural (philosophical) knowledge of God, it retreated almost automatically to the philosophical concept of God. This situation is observable up until the Protestant orthodoxy.

3. Divinity and Humanity

After the early church had adopted the Trinitarian dogma and after it was clarified that Jesus Christ is God, this inevitably led to the discussion of how divinity and humanity in Christ relate to each other. The doctrinal decision of Chalcedon was:

"We thus follow the Holy Fathers and confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and teach all with one accord, that the same was perfect in the Godhead and the same was perfect in humanity, the same as the true God, and as a true man, a rational soul and a body, of the same being with the father according to the deity and of the same being according to the human nature, in every respect similar to us, without sin; that he is from everlasting of the Father born according to the deity, but according to humanity the same in the last days for our sake and the sake of our salvation from the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos."

In this passage, Jesus is confessed as both fully God as well as a perfect human. The *homoousion* is applied to both sides. Jesus is consubstantial with God, such as Nicaea confessed, but equally consubstantial with us according to his humanity. Expressly his sinlessness is emphasized. The concept of "Theotokos" in view of Mary is for some churches a fig leaf to justify an idolatrous cult of Mary, but that is not the intention of the

term, but it is rather due to the survival of the ancient fertility cults which saw their Christian representative in Mary. Theologically, the term is legitimate, that Mary gave birth not to an ordinary human, but to the Son of God and therefore God himself, because this is according to Scripture.

In view of the mutual relatedness of the two natures, Chalcedon confesses:

> *[We acknowledge] "one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, the Only-born, disclosed unmixed in two natures, unchanged, unseparated and undivided; by no means is the difference of the natures repealed by the union, rather the character of each nature is preserved, and both parties shall meet as one person and one hypostasis, not divided or separated into two persons, but one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ ...".*

In these sentences, the so-called two-nature-doctrine is presented. In it divinity and humanity in Christ are called "nature." The *physis*-term, it seems, denotes the effectiveness corresponding to the essence (*ousia*). The Chalcedonense does not speak explicitly of two beings (*ousiai*), but only of the essential unity of God and man. We shy away from speaking of two *beings* in Christ, but at most of two *units of being* because the *unio hypostatica* prohibits the separation of the person of Jesus into two separate beings.

F.P. Hager outlines the meanings of the concept of *physis*[9]: root meanings of the concept of *physis* are: nature, essence, as well as development and growth (genetic aspect). In Plato, *physis* is the actual principle of nature, the soul that permeates everything, including the physical. Also ideas have their own, imperishable *physis*. Here, the idea of the good in Plato is the highest principle; it is

beyond truth, knowledge, being and essence of the cause of everything, and is therefore also the producer of the *physis (phytourgós)*. The mental world of ideas is thus the true nature. *Physis* in Aristotle appears to be the essence of real beings (the individual man, the tree, etc.); it is the substance-giving form of essence of a natural being composite of form and substance, the power of nature.

In Josephus, *physis* carries the meaning of *character*, the *very being* (of a person).[10] Augustine defines: "Nature is that which we recognize that it is something of its kind." (*ipsa natura nihil est aliud, quam id, quod intelligitur in suo genere, aliquid esse*)[11]. Here we find an identity with the terms *essentia* (essence) and *substantia* (substance); *natura*, however, signifies not the animal-material nature, but the creative (*creatrix*). Otherwise, the Augustinian concept of nature has similar features as the concept of being.[12] Augustine's concept of nature includes - like in Aristotle - a creative-dynamic element.

We see from these examples that even the concept of nature was too vague to be automatically biased in its use toward a philosophical view. Whereas the Early Church claims a divine and human nature of Christ, it considers the effects of the respective being, that is, what is wrought by the respective nature. That Jesus had a human nature (in everything like a human, though without sin) is comprehensible. That he had a divine nature was not obvious from the outset, but was revealed through the characteristics mentioned in the first part. I handle the concept of nature comprehensively as unity of being and working, in other words: the essence of a person is not available without the proper corresponding efficacy, and vice versa. Because both natures were evident in their characteristics of being

and working in Jesus, the Early Church has rightly used the concept of nature for the divinity and humanity.

From my point of view I consider the statements of Chalcedon to be right and I defend them against biases and I also claim them with respect to the discharge of the person of Jesus in modern theology. However, we must also ensure that we interpret the terms that we use according to the meaning of Holy Scripture.

4. Conclusion

We have started with the question of how the Christian church determines in the encounter with the Greco-Roman culture God and the deity of Christ, as well as the mutual relationship of divinity and humanity in Christ. We have seen that the concepts it has used are quite scriptural, if they are defined by the biblical material contents.

However, it was inevitable that the power of ontology led to the opinion that, contrary to Scripture, God was regarded as the Supreme Being, immutable and resting in himself. Then it became problematic even to speak of God, because an absolute being, a perfect being, even an abstract Unum is not positively describable. With such a concept of God, an acting of God is hardly proposable, but above all the incarnation and the passion become an insurmountable problem. Thus the suffering of Christ is emptied into a mere human suffering. There is no real reconciliation with God because Jesus as God could not suffer. If we understand the divine and the human in Christ statically, as quiescent entities or substances resting in themselves, and bring them together as divinity and humanity, then we do not get to a living person, to the

hypostatic union in Jesus Christ, but to a hybrid creature, composed of nature and super-nature. This static neutralism needs to be abandoned and corrected by the personal, dynamic-revelation-historical thinking of the Bible.[13] The God of the Bible is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Father of Jesus Christ, not the God of the philosophers. Jesus Christ is God the Son, in the flesh, and in him we recognize how God really is, when he says something like, "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45).

BERNHARD KAISER (Dr. habil.), is founder and director of the Institute for Reformed Theology in Reiskirchen and lecturer in Systematic Theology (Selye-János-University in Komárno, Slovakia).

ENDNOTES

[1] Störig I, 219.

[2] J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 129. *Hypostasis* would gain in Origen already the sense of "individual subsistence." - J. Behm notes in his discussion of the philosophical use of *morphe* that nature and form are related to each other. Through the form the character is perceived. But: „Aufs Ganze gesehen, kommt in der überwiegenden Mehrzahl der reichen Bedeutungsnuancen zum Ausdruck, daß *morphe* eigentlich etwas Sinnenfälliges, sich der Wahrnehmung Darstellendes meint, eben als solches, ohne den Gedanken an Sein oder Schein auch nur zu berühren." ThW IV, 753,37-40, s.v. *morphe*

[3] Heinrichs, J. „Ontologie", in: TRE 25, 244-252

[4] Bächli/Graeser, Grundbegriffe, „Eleatik, Eleaten", p. 56.

[5] Hirschberger 1, 32.

[6] Bächli/Graeser, Grundbegriffe, „Sein", p. 189.

[7] J. de Vries, *Grundbegriffe der Scholastik*, p. 107

[8] Cf. Delling, ThW IX, 580, 31, s.v. *chronos* A.8.

[9] On the following: HWPh 6, s.v. Natur I.

[10] H. Köster, ThW IX,263, s.v. *physis*, ähnl. Justin (ebd. p. 270)

[11] Augustine, De moribus ecclesiae catholicae 2/2; cf. Rosenau, H., "Natur", in: TRE Studienausg. 24, 101.

[12] Cf. the statement: *omnis natura in quantum natura est, bona est.* (*De libero arbitrio* 3/13 u 36) (vgl. T. Gregory, HWPh 6, s.v. Natur II.)

[13] „Christus, Christologie" in: Taschenlexikon Religion und Theologie, p. 646 (vgl. TRT Bd. 1, p. 260)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Augustin, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae.*

Augustin, *De libero arbitrio.*

Bächli, A., Graeser, A. *Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie. Ein Lexikon.* Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000.

Behm, J. „morphe", in: *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament.* Hg. G. Kittel. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1942 (*ThW*) IV, 750-760.

„Christus, Christologie", in: *Taschenlexikon Religion und Theologie*, S. 646 (vgl. *TRT* Bd. 1, S. 260)].

de Vries, J. *Grundbegriffe der Scholastik.* Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchges. 1983.

Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche (BSLK). 7. Aufl. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976.

Gregory, T. „Natur II. Frühes Mittelalter", in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. Hg. J. Ritter u. K. Gründer. Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchges. 1984 *(HWPh)* 6, 441-447.

Hager, F. P. „Natur I. Antike", in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie.* Hg. J. Ritter u. K. Gründer. Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchges. 1984 *(HWPh)* 6, 421-441.

Heinrichs, J. „Ontologie", in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*. Hg. G. Müller. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995 *(TRE)* Studienausg. 25, 244-252.

Hirschberger, J. *Geschichte der Philosophie*. Band 1. *Altertum und Mittelalter*. 13. Aufl., Freiburg: Herder, 1976.

Kelly, J.N.D. *Early Christian Doctrines. New York u.a.: Harper & Row, 1978*

Köster, H. „*physis*" in: *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*. Hg. G. Friedrich, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973 *(ThW)* IX, 246-271.

Ritter, A. M. „Dogma und Lehre in der Alten Kirche", in: *Handbuch der Dogmen- und Theologiegeschichte,* Band 1. *Die Lehrentwicklung im Rahmen der Katholizität.* Hg. C. Andresen, (*HDThG* I), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982, S. 99-283.

Rosenau, H. „Natur", in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, hg. G. Müller. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994 *(TRE)* Studienausg. 24, 101.

Störig, H.J. *Kleine Weltgeschichte der Philosophie.* Band 1. Frankfurt: Fischer, 1974.

Williams, R. „Jesus Christus II. Alte Kirche", in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, hg. G. Müller. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987 *(TRE)* Studienausg. 16, S. 726-745.

WHO

IS

THIS

MAN,

THAT

EVEN

THE

WINDS

AND

THE SEA

OBEY

HIM?

MT 8:27