Jesus, the Human Face of God, in the Christology of Piet Schoonenberg

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Abstract

This study explores Piet Schoonenberg's response to the Council of Chalcedon's Christological statement regarding the divine and human nature of the one person Jesus, the incarnated Logos. In response to Chalcedon, Schoonenberg argues that Jesus' full human personhood is the key to understanding His divine Lordship.

In 1966, Dutch theologian Piet Schoonenberg presented a paper to the members of the Catholic Theological Society of the Netherlands in which he queried whether it would be possible to develop a Christology with the affirmation of Jesus' divinity but not the formula of the Council of Chalcedon. Schoonenberg's address served as the catalyst for his writing *The Christ* in which his starting point is the opposite of Chalcedon. In the Chalcedon formulation, the pre-existent divine Logos assumes a human nature, whereas in Schoonenberg's Christology the divinity of the Logos is disclosed in and through Jesus' humanity.[1]

This study of Schoonenberg's Christology examines his work, *The Christ*, in conjunction with some of his other theological writings. It reviews various critics' assessment of Schoonenberg's Christology of God's total presence in Jesus and then considers Schoonenberg's response to his critics. The study concludes with this author's reflections concerning Schoonenberg's contribution to an enhanced understanding of the Jesus of history who is the Christ of faith.

In the beginning pages of *The Christ*, Schoonenberg stresses that God as Creator is the deepest foundation of everything that exists. Schoonenberg states:

All activity in the world is borne by God's continuous creation. … Creation is not an event at the beginning of our history, but the relation which exists between the whole world in the whole of its history, on the one hand, and the infinite God on the other. 'Creation' … says that in this relation God is always the one who realizes the world in all its components and aspects. [2]

For Schoonenberg, God realizes the world precisely in its continual becoming. The Creator God who gives to human persons their being and activity[3] offers them a graced relationship. God's initiative is recognized everywhere that human beings are liberated to love. Every loving gesture of a person toward another originates through God's initiative of grace. Likewise, each human being's receiving of another's loving gesture is also a grace. The exemplar *par excellence* of this kind of giving/receiving relationship is Jesus Christ whose words and actions demonstrate what it truly means to be a person liberated to love and be loved by others.

Within this creation/theology of grace context, Schoonenberg begins his christological study by examining the Council of Chalcedon's declaration that Jesus Christ is *homoousios*with the Father in His divinity and *homoousios* with humankind in His humanity. According to the statement of the Council of Chalcedon, Jesus Christ is

[m]ade known in two natures (physein) … concurring in one person (prosopon) and one hypostasis - not parted or divided into two persons (prosopa), but one and the same Son and Only-begotten, the divine Logos.[4]

For Schoonenberg, this statement "absorbs all the divine and all the human that is acknowledged about Jesus by scripture, but adds something unknown to scripture: the distinction of natures."[5] According to Schoonenberg, the

[1] See Robert C. Ware, "Christology in Historical Perspective", *TheHeythrop Journal* 15 (1974): 62.
[2] Piet Schoonenberg, S.J., *The Christ* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 22.
[3] See Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 31.
[4] Stephen Paul Pujdak, *Christological Statements: Fact and Interpretation: A Study of the Christology of Piet Schoonenberg*(Ann Arbor, Michigan: Xerox University Microfilm, 1976), 137.

notion of "nature" in the Chalcedonian statement is problematic, since it differs from the contemporary meaning of "nature." In patristic times, "nature" referred to the equality or unity of substance of a determined being, whereas, in contemporary usage, the word is used "in opposition to and beneath the person and his/her self-expression."[6]

According to Schoonenberg, the Chalcedonian formula "forces us either to deny a human person in Christ and, thus, his consubstantiality with us, or to admit the human person with the result that Jesus Christ is no longer one person."[7] This being the case, Schoonenberg poses the following questions:

Is Jesus' human personality absorbed in that of the Word, and if so, is He then de-personalized as man? Or does it exist as an individual human center of acts, decisions, and self-consciousness beside the divine person of the Word and in competition with it? … Does the Chalcedonian pattern lead us to a disguised or a divided Christ?[8]

In his consideration of these questions, Schoonenberg first turns to Leontius of Byzantium who developed a theory of enhypostasis according to which the Chalcedonian statement has been interpreted throughout the centuries. Leontius defined hypostasis (person) as that which exists in itself. Given this definition, Leontius concluded that nature cannot exist without a hypostasis. Leontius' defense of Chalcedon's two-nature christological model was that Jesus' "human nature … exists in the hypostasis of the Logos."[9] Simply put, according to Leontius, Jesus' "human nature has its personality in the divine Word."[10] Jesus' human nature is enhypostatic in the Logos and, for this reason, is not itself a person.[11]

According to Schoonenberg, the Chalcedonian Christological statement is consistent with the biblical testimony that Jesus is the Logos who took on human flesh. Since this statement seeks to elucidate what Scripture implies concerning Jesus, Schoonenberg insists on viewing it in its proper context, that is, uncolored by Leontius' later theory of enhypostasis.

Schoonenberg roots his Christology in the fundamental theological principle that God reveals Godself in human history. Apart from human history, God cannot be known. For Schoonenberg, this principle yields the following christological premises: 1) The human Jesus who lived, died, and rose into glorified life is the starting point of Christology; and 2) Any statement concerning the pre-existent Logos must be related to the earthly/glorified Christ.[12]

Schoonenberg's Christology proceeds "from the life of Jesus to a recognition and confession of His divinity."[13] In *The Christ* and other of his theological writings, Schoonenberg focuses on the one person Jesus Christ who is a human person in whom is found the divine. Schoonenberg's Christology explores Jesus' earthly and glorified life and seeks to unravel the dilemma: God or Jesus.

Jesus Christ: One Person

In his discussion of the constitution of Jesus Christ as one person, Schoonenberg asserts that "Scripture teaches us nothing of a … dual personality in Christ, which would divide His person."[14]Schoonenberg adds: "That Jesus is a man is just as much a presupposition of the New Testament as the fact that He is one person."[15]

For Schoonenberg, "Human personhood, and thus an individual human-being and-becoming, … not only may not be excluded, but must be positively awarded to Jesus Christ."[16]

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[5]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 57.
[6]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 62.
[7] Piet Schoonenberg, "From a Two-Nature Christology to a Christology of Presence," in *Christian Action and Openness tothe World*, ed. Joseph Papin (Villanova, Pa.: The Villanova University Press, 1970), 122.
[8]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 64 - 5.
[9]Pujdak, *Christological Statements*, 140.
[10]Schoonenberg, "From a Two-Nature Christology to a Christology of Presence,": 131.
[11] See Schoonenberg, "From a Two-Nature Christology to a Christology of Presence,": 131.
[12] See Pujdak, *Christological Statements*, 148.
[13]Pujdak, *Christological Statements*, 146.
[14]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 69.
[15]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 71.
[16] See Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 73.

Given that Jesus is a human person, a dilemma arises from the fact that He must still be called a divine person, since, according to the Chalcedonian affirmation, He is "personally the same as the Father's eternal Son."[17] In response to this dilemma, Schoonenberg discusses the biblically inspired 19th century kenotic theory, according to which the incarnated Logos emptied Self of divine attributes in assuming a human nature, without ceasing to be a divine person. Schoonenberg argues that the question of whether Jesus, the human person, can, at the same time, be called a divine person, cannot be solved by the kenotic theory, since it does not affirm that Jesus is a human person.

Schoonenberg maintains that magisterial discussions of the Church affirm the concurrence of divinity and humanity in the one person, Jesus Christ. Regarding this, Schoonenberg asserts:

The formula of Chalcedon that the same Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, can be further elaborated by saying that He is divine person and human person - not by an enumeration of persons - but because one and the same person is both divine and human.[18]

In his Christology, Schoonenberg emphasizes that the only way to know the eternal Logos is in and through the human person Jesus and that it is possible that "God becomes Trinity through communicating [Him]Self in a total way to, and being present in the man Jesus as Word and in the Church as Spirit."[19]Schoonenberg holds that the becoming that takes place in God consists in God's self-giving in absolute freedom. In the history of salvation, God's fullest and ultimate self-gift to humankind is Jesus Christ, who represents the epitomization of God's becoming more *our* God. Schoonenberg insists that this does not mean that God becomes God or more God *per se* in the Christ event.

According to Schoonenberg, the Logos became, in Jesus, an historical person. Thus, Schoonenberg reverses Leontius' theory of enhypostasis, so that the divine nature of the Logos is enhypostatic in Jesus' human person. The Logos' fullness of presence in the human person Jesus constitutes Him as the Father's Son. Schoonenberg maintains that his theory of enhypostasis preserves the Chalcedonian model of the one person of Jesus Christ being fully divine and fully human.[20]

In his Christology, Schoonenberg emphasizes that, in Jesus' human existence, His relationship to His Father was paramount. Clarity characterized Jesus' relationship with His Abba. Clarity refers to Jesus' singleness of mind, that is, His absolute, unconditional surrender of His life to His Father's will and His living free from "all self-interest that might stand in the way of God's Kingdom."[21]

Immediacy also characterized Jesus' relationship to His Father. When Jesus stated: "The one who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9), He was referring to the fact that He enjoyed an intimate relationship with His Abba. In His teaching and miracles, the historical Jesus felt the presence of His Abba working in and through Him. In Jesus, the Father revealed Self as love to humankind. Jesus is the active sign of the Father's boundless love.[22]

To summarize, Schoonenberg'schristological starting point is the human person Jesus. In Schoonenberg's Christology, "God is understood to be present in a human person, rather than a human nature subsisting in a divine person."[23] For Schoonenberg, in the Incarnation the Logos continues to be what the Logos is and becomes what the Logos is not. According to Schoonenberg, the human person of Jesus Christ is "the second divine person inasmuch as God as Logos is present in Jesus."[24]
In his writings, Schoonenberg stresses that both the divine and the human realities constitute Jesus' person." Jesus is human in a divine way and divine in a human way. In Jesus, human divinization and divine humanization reach their apex.

[17]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 75.
[18]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 87.
[19]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 85.
[20] See Pujdak, *Christological Statements*, 180.
[21]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 100.
[22] See Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 103.
[23] Thomas N. Hart, *To Know and Follow Jesus: Contemporary Christology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 65.
[24] Piet Schoonenberg, "Trinity - The Consummated Covenant: Theses on the Doctrine of the Trinitarian God," *Studies inReligion* 5 (1975): 115.

Jesus' Earthly and Glorified Life

Schoonenberg's study of Jesus' earthly and glorified life includes 1) Jesus' earthly life in general; 2) Jesus' knowledge, will, and sinlessness; 3) Jesus' resurrected/glorified life; and 4) the question of "God or Jesus?".

Jesus' Earthly Life in General

Schoonenberg discusses Jesus' earthly life in general by asserting that

Jesus is in history; he is inserted in it; he is 'historical.' This means that he is defined by our history, but also himself has his history, makes his own history, and thus defines ours.[25]

According to Schoonenberg, the gospel accounts of Jesus' earthly life belong to the "historical situation in which Jesus pronounced His message and in which the first communities developed it and wrote it down."[26] Even though the gospels are not histories of Jesus, they elicit faith in Jesus who really existed and who was "situated by both the history of evil and of salvation."[27] By being a totally free person who conquered the power of sin, Jesus brought to its climactic moment the history of salvation to which He was heir through His rootedness in Judaism.

Jesus' Knowledge

Schoonenberg's reflections on Jesus' knowledge include a discussion of the scholastic thesis that during His earthly life Jesus was *viatorsimuletcomprehensor*, that is, "earthly pilgrim and possessor of the heavenly vision."[28] Objecting to this thesis, Schoonenberg argues that "one cannot be at the same time completed and on the way to completion, for the two are mutually exclusive."[29] For Schoonenberg, scholastic teaching leaves unanswered the question: How can a divine person who possesses an all-embracing knowledge also experience a growing knowledge?

Schoonenberg explains that the scholastic understanding of Jesus' knowledge is based on the Hellenistic concept of the human person that gauges the perfection of the person according to the degree of his or her knowledge.[30] Contrariwise, Schoonenberg envisions human, on-going development of knowledge in the following way:
For man, the lack of the good of complete knowledge is the wherewithal for the higher good of venturing one's own future and thus of forming oneself from out of oneself and in oneself and in one's relation to others and the whole world.[31]

Applying this view to Jesus, Schoonenberg contends that as a human person, Jesus gradually came to a clear knowledge of His whole self and life task. For Schoonenberg, this notion is more consistent with what it means to say that Jesus was truly a human person than the scholastic view based on the Hellenistic concept of person.

Continuing his discussion of Jesus' knowledge, Schoonenberg affirms Karl Rahner's modification of the scholastic thesis regarding Jesus' experience of *scientiabeata.* Schoonenberg notes that, according to Rahner,

The *scientiabeata* is not conceived primarily as the vision of an object but as the consciousness that Jesus has of his own divine being-person. … Consequently, it is conceived as an immediate… consciousness, but not as a beatific completion. … [I]t has become the human self-consciousness of Jesus… from which the omniscience and completion… have disappeared.[32]

Agreeing with Rahner, Schoonenberg asserts that

The peculiar nature of Jesus' self-consciousness is … that he knows God to be fully present in himself, that the Father is in him and he in the Father. … In every man the inalienable ego comes to self-possession and self-expression in contact with the world, in dialogue with one's fellow men, and, in all this, in a self-orientation to

[25]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 105.
[26]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 111.
[27]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 116.
[28]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 118.
[29]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 118.
[30] See Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 124.
[31]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 124.
[32]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 126.

God. This is no different in Jesus. The only difference … is that the immediacy of his contact with God is predominant.[33]

Schoonenberg maintains that, given Jesus' developing understanding of His prophetic mission, He gradually became aware of the immanence of His death. Schoonenberg states:

It is possible that Jesus only slowly came to the discovery that the Kingdom of God would certainly not be realized during his earthly life and that he should consequently not bring it near for his people through his preaching alone, in view of the unbelief which he encountered. Then also his rejection and his death came into perspective.[34]

Given His existential situation of the possibility of death because ofHis prophetic activity, Jesus adopted an attitude of surrender in faith to His Father. Schoonenberg reflects that

Only when the opposition grows and opponents develop a truly deadly hatred of him [Jesus] does there dawn upon him the significance of the violent death that awaits him. Now he recognizes from the circumstances that his Father's will for him is to fulfill the function of the servant of Yahweh to the end, to die in order to bring the many to righteousness.[35]

Jesus' Will

Schoonenberg depicts Jesus as a human person who matured through decision-making. In His choices in response to changing situations in His life,

Jesus' human will was not subjected to and led by the divine will of the pre-existent Logos; rather, the human will of Jesus' human person subjected itself to the divine will of his Father.[36]

In all of His decisions, Jesus consistently "chose for God and in view of the Kingdom."[37] According to Schoonenberg,

The Kingdom of God is the constant theme in [Jesus'] preaching. He could confront others so emphatically with the choice of accepting or rejecting the Kingdom because he himself was confronting the choice. … He placed care for the Kingdom of God before all … and he could do this because he himself chose in light of the Kingdom.[38]

Jesus' Sinlessness

For Schoonenberg, Jesus' sinlessness is an expression of His consistent choosing for God and the Kingdom. Regarding this, Schoonenberg notes that " Jesus'sinlessness can be expressed… as righteousness, holiness, obedience, service, and love. … The disciples knew it by means of what emanated from Jesus' person."[39]

Schoonenberg interprets Jesus' forty day, pre-public ministry experience of being put to the test in the desert as a paradigm of His whole earthly life as an on-going temptation to "choose the will of man oriented to success without suffering over the will of God, which demanded loyalty even unto suffering."[40] Hence, Jesus' sinlessness does not imply an incapacity to sin. Rather, it means that, through His consistent choice of His Father's will, Jesus conquered the real possibility to sin present in Him.

Jesus' Resurrected/Glorified Life

In his writings, Schoonenberg emphasizes that Jesus' resurrection and glorification are the foundation of the Christian faith. Concerning any foreknowledge that Jesus might have had of His resurrection, Schoonenberg maintains that

[33]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 127.
[34]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 134.
[35] Piet Schoonenberg, "He Emptied Himself: Philippians 2.7 in *Who is Jesus of Nazareth*? (Concilium, Vol. 11) ed. Edward Schillebeeckx (New York: Paulist Press, 1966), 63-4.
[36] J. Dupuis, "The Christology of Piet Schoonenberg," *The Clergy Monthly* (Delhi), 37 (1973): 234.
[37]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 139-40.
[38]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 139-40.
[39]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 140.
[40]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 143.

There was probably more variation and more indefiniteness in Jesus' prediction of God's victory in him than is given by the concept of 'resurrection' in itself. But that he was convinced of such a victory is undeniable."[41]

According to Schoonenberg, "On earth, he [Jesus] could not believe in his resurrection as fact; … he could only hope for it."[42]

Schoonenberg stresses that the risen Christ enjoys completed being as a result of His earthly life of surrender in faith, hope, and love to His Father's will. Jesus is the Father's Son who is fulfilled, strengthened, and made victorious in His resurrection.[43] The resurrected Jesus who ascended to glory and proceeded into eternal life makes Himself salvifically present to humankind today, as He did to His disciples to whom he appeared after His resurrection. According to Schoonenberg, the glorified/ascended Christ lives on not merely in memory but as a person who extends His Risen corporeality by dwelling in the hearts of believers[44] and drawing them to growth in faith, hope, and love.

The Question: "God or Jesus?"

Schoonenberg views the question of "God [the Father] or Jesus" as a false dilemma, since, in the gospels, the Father and Jesus are not in competition. Jesus' recognition of His divine Sonship is precisely His realization that He is born from, and one with, the substance of the Father, i.e., that He is completely from the Father. The Father, who receives Jesus' act of total self-emptying in the crucifixion, "bestows himself through the glorified Son… in the Spirit."[45] In Schoonenberg's words, "the Spirit, having been like the Logos, a form of God's presence in the pre-incarnational economy, becomes personal in Christ's glorification."[46] Through their mutual act of love, that is, the Spirit of self-emptying, the Father and Son continue to be fully present to all of creation.

Critics' Assessment of Schoonenberg's Christology

Affirming Schoonenberg's emphasis on Jesus' true humanity, Frans van Beeck asserts that

[I]n order to achieve an understanding of Jesus' life, it is essential to understand Jesus as a fully human person. … The pre-existent … Logos must not be affirmed in such a way as to deny the full personhood of the man Jesus Christ.[47]

Schoonenberg's "decision to use the term 'person' in a way that is closer to natural language"[48] is a point that van Beeck highlights in Schoonenberg's Christology. According to van Beeck, Schoonenberg's depiction of Jesus as a human person with a center of consciousness and freedom is helpful, since most people today understand person in this way.

Another strength that van Beeck notes is that Schoonenberg's Christology does not confess "Christ as less divine than the Church has confessed him"[49] in its Chalcedonian statement. According to van Beeck, Schoonenberg's emphasis on Jesus' human personhood is not a denial of His divinity.

For van Beeck, a weakness in Schoonenberg's Christology is that it "shares the tradition's narrowness in concentrating too much on the individual Jesus."[50]

vanBeeck maintains that Schoonenberg, in his definition of the person of Jesus, fails to include "the web of human relationships that contributes decisively to his [Jesus'] individuality."[51]

Michael L. Cook agrees with van Beeck that one of Schoonenberg's strengths is his emphasis on Jesus' humanity, which implies that Jesus "must have everything that is essentially constitutive of the human, … above all, human

[41]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 129.
[42]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 150.
[43] See Schoonenberg, "From a Two-Nature Christology to a Christology of Presence,":142.
[44] See Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 169.
[45]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*,186.
[46] Piet Schoonenberg, "Spirit Christology and Logos Christology," *Bijdragen* 38 (1977): 367.
[47]Frans Joseph van Beeck, *Christ Proclaimed* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979),385-86.
[48]vanBeeck, *Christ Proclaimed*, 385.
[49]vanBeeck, *Christ Proclaimed*, 387.
[50]vanBeeck, *Christ Proclaimed*, 385.
[51]vanBeeck, *Christ Proclaimed*, 396.

personhood."[52] For Cook, another strength in Schoonenberg'sChristology is that it approaches Jesus' divine Sonship in the context of his full human personhood.

In Cook's opinion, a third strength lies in Schoonenberg's theory of the enhypostasis of the Word, whereby "it is primarily not the human nature which is enhypostatic in the divine person but the divine nature in the human person."[53] According to Cook, the value of this formulation is that

[I]t steadfastly refuses to locate the divinity of Jesus outside his humanity. Jesus can be called God only by his being man in a special way … such that the mystery of his divinity is not above or beneath the man Jesus but precisely in his being-man itself.[54]

Jesus is the humanity of God. He is God's self-expression in the world.

Another strength in Schoonenberg's Christology that Cook notes is its "insight into the uniqueness of Jesus as 'the final human completion'."[55] In Jesus, the Father's divine creative initiative realized the deepest personalization possible within creation. By identifying His Logos with Jesus, the Father's creative initiative constituted Jesus as fully, and hence, uniquely human. This is true since, as Cook reflects: "Jesus reveals to us what ultimately constitutes the fulfillment of human personhood: union with the divine."[56]

In Cook's estimation, however, Schoonenberg's depiction of Jesus as the humanity of God is not radical enough. Enunciating what he believes would bring Schoonenberg's Christology to its most radical expression, Cook asserts that "if we take Jesus' humanness seriously, then the unavoidable implication … is that the Father truly risks his personal identity as Creator in the free obedience of his Son."[57]

Another critic, J. Dupuis, commends Schoonenberg for

… taking at their face value many biblical affirmations concerning Christ's human psychology… [in] the way in which he shows the full humanness of Jesus as brought into relief by his struggles and trials, his limitations and sufferings.[58]

This being said, Dupuis questions whether Schoonenberg does justice to all the New Testament data regarding Jesus' personal identity. Dupuis contends that Schoonenberg takes only the early strata of New Testament Christology into account and, therefore, fails to reflect the later New Testament theological affirmation of the Logos' pre-existence as a person prior to the Incarnation.

Additionally, Dupuis discusses Schoonenberg's Christology in relationship to the dogmatic intentions of Church Councils. Dupuis stresses that

It is necessary to maintain that the Trinitarian Councils meant to affirm the existence of the Son, as "another" with the Father, independently of … God's manifestation in Jesus Christ.[59]

According to Dupuis, Schoonenberg fails to understand that such affirmations attest to the pre-existence of the Son in His divinity.

Finally, Dupuis questions whether Schoonenberg's theory of the enhypostasis of the Logos in the man Jesus, which maintains that the fullness of God's presence is in Jesus' human person, is "able to distinguish Christ from all other men in whom God is present, in such a way as to account for the fact that only this human person is a divine human person."[60]

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[52] Michael L. Cook, S.J., *The Jesus of Faith: A Study in Christology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 141.
[53]Schoonenberg, *The Christ*, 87.
[54] Cook, *The Jesus of Faith*, 152.
[55] Cook, *The Jesus of Faith*, 153.
[56] Cook, *The Jesus of Faith*, 153.
[57] Cook, *The Jesus of Faith*, 155.
[58] Dupuis, "The Christology of Piet Schoonenberg,",*The Clergy Monthly*(Delhi) 37(1973): 236.
[59] Dupuis, "The Christology of Piet Schoonenberg": 239.
[60] Dupuis, "The Christology of Piet Schoonenberg": 240.

Schoonenberg's Response to His Critics

In a letter published in *Theology Digest*, Piet Schoonenberg summarized some of his theological views with the hope that, in doing so, his critics and readers might better understand his Christology. In this letter, Schoonenberg affirms his belief in the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Schoonenberg expresses his view that "in the Christ event, God who is love gives us grace upon grace, the Logos becoming Son and the Spirit becoming Paraclete."[61]

Also, in an article entitled "Trinity - the Consummated Covenant: Theses on the Doctrine of the Trinitarian God," Schoonenberg provides additional reflection regarding his Christological approach. Schoonenberg states that "The relations between Father, Son, and Spirit are accessible to us only in their relations to us."[62] The immanent Trinity is accessible to human beings only as the economic Trinity. Hence, just as any theology of the Trinity must begin with the economic Trinity, so, too, for Schoonenberg, any authentic Christology must have the humanity of Jesus Christ as its starting point. According to Schoonenberg,

The man Jesus not only has a human 'centre of activity' … but he also is, psychologically and ontologically, a human person. … The human person of Jesus Christ can be called the second divine person inasmuch as God … as Logos is present in Jesus."[63]

In essence, for Schoonenberg, "Jesus' divine Sonship is his human-ness to the utmost."[64]

Concluding Remarks

To summarize, in Piet Schoonenberg's Christology "the Logos goes out of the Father and becomes the Son at the Incarnation. And the Spirit goes out from the Son at his glorification and becomes … the Paraclete guiding to the full truth."[65] For Schoonenberg, God's becoming is the "communication of God's richness"[66] to creation.

In his Christology, Schoonenberg depicts Jesus ontologically as a human person, i.e., a human subject of conscious and free acts. Jesus is "really capable of human consciousness, growth in knowledge and wisdom, … real astonishment, fear, and tears… [and] free historical decisions."[67] The human person Jesus is the One in whom God is fully present. Such statements remind this author of Pauline assertions about Jesus such as "in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Col. 1:19) and "in Him dwells the whole fullness of the deity bodily." (Col. 2:9)

In his writings, Schoonenberg describes Jesus, the "pioneer of salvation,"[68] as the "eschatological highpoint of God's saving action."[69] The glorified, risen Jesus, who lives in the final completion, remains the bringer of salvation to creation.

For Schoonenberg, the Christ Event leads to novel theological speculation regarding the Trinity, i.e., the becoming of the persons of the Son and Spirit. Of course, it is not possible to determine whether Schoonenberg's process kind of understanding of personhood within the Trinity is true or false. That being said, this author finds Schoonenberg's thinking intriguing and mind-expanding. Additionally, for this author, Schoenberg's stress on Jesus' human personhood as the window into His divinity is an excellent way of enabling contemporary persons to identify with and understand Jesus who is the Father's Son, the Second Person of the Trinity.

Of note is the fact that

The Pontifical Biblical Commission's 1984 document on Christology, *The Bible and Christology*, refers to Schoonenberg's work in the context of updating the formulations of the Council of Chalcedon. The formulas must continually be renewed, notes the document, in order that they might more perfectly reflect the object of the definitions.

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[61] Piet Schoonenberg, S.J., "A Letter," *Theology Digest* 23 (Fall 1975):.225.
[62]Schoonenberg, "Trinity - The Consummated Covenant": 113.
[63]Schoonenberg, "Trinity - The Consummated Covenant": 111.
[64]Schoonenberg, "Trinity - The Consummated Covenant": 115.
[65]Schoonenberg, "Spirit Christology and Logos Christology":375.
[66]Schoonenberg, "Spirit Christology and Logos Christology": 370.
[67]Schoonenberg, "From a Two-Nature Christology to a Christology of Presence": 124.
[68]Schoonenberg, "From a Two-Nature Christology to a Christology of Presence": 141.
[69]Schoonenberg, "From a Two-Nature Christology to a Christology of Presence"" 136.

The Commission speaks specifically of Schoonenberg's reference to the 'human person' of Christ, and they suggest that it would perhaps be better to speak of his 'human personality' rather than his human person. However, they do not accuse Schoonenberg of heretical teaching.[70]

In Schoonenberg's Christology, Jesus, the only begotten Son of the Father, is the same Christ of faith affirmed by Chalcedon's two-nature formula.

Finally, even though Piet Schoonenberg's Christology does not develop the themes of Jesus' message and activity to the greatest possible extent, in this author's opinion, it succeeds in translating

…the content of all the assertions in the tradition about Christ's transcendence and salvific meaning back into the history of this concrete man [human person] in order to better ascertain their meaning for faith today.[71]

[70] William J. La Due, *Jesus Among the Theologians: Contemporary Interpretations of Christ* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2001), 102.
[71] Pujdak, *Christological Statements*, 135-6.