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Report on the Habilitation work by Dr. Petr Gallus in the form of the book publication:

**The Perspective of Resurrection.
A Trinitarian Christology**
Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2021

The book “is the results of the grant project ... ‘Humanity of God as God’s Accommodation to the World’,” provided by the Czech Science Foundation. It attempts to offer “an outline of a contemporary Christology” and at the same time intends to face the “challenge of the current postmodern situation.” It starts in the first chapter (“Christology as the Centre of Theology”) with a concentration on what is known as the doctrine of the two natures of Christ, i. e., humanity and divinity. The author is convinced that the appropriate starting point for his project is “the perspective of resurrection,” which binds together christology and soteriology as well as the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ (2). He also intends to provide the ground for a further book publication on pneumatology and anthropology in the context of the doctrine of creation. Strongly inspired by publications of Ingolf Dalferth (his book “Crucified and Resurrected” is present

throughout) and in critical discussions with mostly German Neo-Protestant voices (Wagner, Danz), he wants to stress the importance of reconciling conservative and liberal theological positions by developing a sound christological and trinitarian theology.

Throughout the book he intends to face “the current postmodern situation” with an inescapable multiperspectival and multicontextual approach to reality. Despite this view, he uses several bipolar frameworks, for example “the relation of theology and philosophy,” “internal and external approaches” or many classical bipolar constellations in theological thinking in order to provide a clarity of orientation. He argues for “a kind of intersubjective objectivity although it will never be a real objective objectivity” (28). The intersubjective orientation requires a constant search for truth, and this search for truth should be based on an “ontological Christology” which “will prove itself useful in the orientation *of* faith, for the orientation *about* Christian faith and for some *further theological and philosophical debate*” (32).

The second chapter, entitled “The Object of Christology,” deals with the highly differentiated “quests for the historical Jesus” with broad references also to New Testament scholarship. Arguing, however, that historical research alone cannot reach “the present Christ” (*Christus praesens*), he develops the complex centering on the crucified and resurrected Christ *for us* (61f). This leads to the third chapter, “The Field of Christology: The Chalcedonian Frame.” Whereas the second chapter chooses biblical scholarship as its main conversation partner, the third chapter deals with a rich field of historical patristic and dogmatic studies. In a convincing concentration on the dogmatic conceptuality it offers almost a text book within the book, examining the christological and trinitarian conceptual achievements in the first centuries, moving on to their reception in the Reformation and among leading theological and philosophical thinkers of the 19th century, particularly Schleiermacher.

With the question, “What to Do With Chalcedon Today?” (152), the author starts a systematic investigation which argues that we should keep the “criteriological function” of Chalcedon, but not its

“substance ontology” (158). His own systematically creative proposal is sketched in pages 162f. and unfolded in the following chapter 4. Obviously inspired by Körtner (2007) and Balserek (2008), the author uses the concept of “accommodation,” in fact, “a combination of divine accommodation and the characteristic of the human being as *imago Dei*” (162). “This accommodation, however, cannot be conceived as *kenosis*, but rather as *plerosis*, as fulfilling of God’s own divinity.” In a brilliant way the author connects “*the divinization of God in his accommodation to humans, and full humanization of humans based on their relationship to God*” (ibid.). On this excellent systematic basis he can first deal with his main “Perspective of Christology: The Resurrection” in his fourth chapter (164). This chapter combines exegetical, historical and systematic-theological insights and reflections, including a multitude of conversation partners. “The resurrection *brings a radically new perspective, a twist, a new light on the whole of reality.*” (168) The author unfolds this with eschatological and trinitarian reflections, leading to the second part of the book.

This part begins in chapter 5 with the critical investigation of classic theological and metaphysical concepts of God in the tradition and their (problematic) impact on Christological teaching. In a much more nuanced way than many previous critics of metaphysical theology, the author includes postmodern metaphysical perspectives (for example, A.N. Whitehead). He carefully introduces his new terminology of “accomodation” – “the accommodation as the fundamental ontological and regulatory term” (201ff) in order to provide new conceptual grounds for great doctrinal issues such as the incarnation, the death of Christ, death and salvation, the resurrection and chapter “God, Time, and Eternity.”

Chapter 6 offers, as the author rightly says, “a slightly speculative attempt to sketch the ontology of incarnation, based on my previous critical appreciation of Chalcedon and on the term of accommodation” (215). He unfolds his view on the process of incarnation as a process of accommodation in dialogue with classical and contemporary theological thinkers, particularly from Roman-Catholic traditions. He

connects his thoughts with reflections on person and personhood based on insights by Pannenberg, Jüngel, Dalferth and Kripke and contributions on the complex topic of the image of God and on Jesus Christ as the true image of God. Here he includes a dialogue with leading theologians of liberation (Sobrino, Boff).

Chapter 7 intends to deal with the death of Jesus Christ, but above all it offers extensive reflections on the immortality of the soul and the critique of this teaching. It offers sharp remarks on interpretations which tried to unfold the meaning of the cross “independent of Easter” and states boldly that “only resurrection sheds a clear light on the cross and what has happened on the cross” (269). The most important dimension, namely that the cross also reveals the world under the power of sin (namely that the global political power Rome, the leaders of religion, the Roman and the Mosaic laws, the corrupted public opinion and morals conspire against the presence and revelation of God) is not adequately presented. As learned as the following reflections on the death of God and the death in God with references to Luther, Hegel, Moltmann, Jüngel and others are – the soteriological depth of the cross seems to be lost in this chapter.

This deficiency is not really compensated in chapter 8: “Salvation: the Cross as Vicarious and Representative Sacrifice?” Here the lack of a dialogue with deeper biblical-exegetical and interdisciplinary scholarship on the topics of sacrifice and atonement becomes obvious. Furthermore, the lack of a deeper pneumatological perspective on the relation of God and humanity becomes obvious. The author speaks of “the aporetic figure of inclusive identification of Jesus Christ with other people” (321). He is convinced that “such identification cannot be conceived and thought.” And in abstraction from the divine Spirit and the Spirit of Christ, this differentiated identification is indeed not conceivable and thinkable. In abstracting from the work of the Spirit, we are left with the opinion that “humanity exists always only as particular humanity” (322).

The author is driven by a passion to make sure that the soteriological work “*must reach out to the particular human and include him or her*” (330). He is also convinced that “the remission of sin (is) an always

individual remission of one's concrete sins" (332). However, this radical individualism and this reductionistic view on sin is to be radically contested on many grounds, not only biblically.

Chapter 9, "The Resurrection," first centers on Pokorný's interpretation of the resurrection events. It then centers on five different interpretations of the "historicity" of the resurrection and a nuanced perspective on the "empty tomb." The author tries to interpret the resurrection as a "meta-historical event" and an "eschatological act of God." I do not see any convincing discussions of the reflections on the continuity and discontinuity between the pre-Easter and the post-Easter life of Jesus Christ, between the fleshly-bodily and the spiritual-bodily existence, the presence of the spiritual body in the post-Easter appearances, and the pouring of the Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit in continuity with the life and work of Jesus Christ. The fact that the author leaves these crucial aspects out/ can be related to his passionate interest to relate his reflections to a "meta-level" in order to connect Christology and trinitarian theology in better ways than previous theologies did.

When the author says that God takes "temporality ... as seriously as is ever possible" (364f), one would wish to see this also with respect to the resurrection witnesses. The Resurrected opens the eyes of the disciples with his greeting of peace, with thanksgiving over the bread, the opening of scriptures, the sending into mission – that is, modest priestly witnesses which have structured the worship of the church and the life of faith over the millennia. This should not be pushed aside by a speculative concentration on an elevation into the divine life and a "participation in eternity" (368).

With chapter 10, "God, Time, and Eternity," I see the author's interests shift to the abstract dimensions of "the relationship of eternity and time and of particularity and universality" (369). Does this lead back into the realms of metaphysics, realms that previous chapters had critically investigated? – Again, we get learned remarks on the relation of God and time and on the concept of eternity in ancient and contemporary theologies. "The Ontology of the Eternity-Time Relation" takes over the control of the discourse about trinitarian

theology. “The christological anchoring of the eternity-time relation” (382) is not convincingly regained by a reintroduction of the fruitful conceptual world of “accommodation.” One can see this loss confirmed when the author states, “The resurrection is primarily an event in the eternal life of God, it is the renewal of the life of God in its fullness.” (387) It is not easy to avoid getting the impression that statements such as “*The resurrection of Jesus Christ is thus the middle of time and temporality,*” are rhetorical ciphers which take over the place of a sound theology of the resurrection.

Chapter 11, “Christology in Postmodern Plurality,” deals with the topics “Christianity among other Religions,” “Pluralism” (basically with the positions of John Hick, Schmidt-Leukel and Roger Haight), referring to the typology of “Inclusivism, Exclusivism” and a third option which could be termed “Dialogue of Particular Perspectives” (415). The book concludes with a plea for an “engaged co-operation in the practical respect with the important dimension of ‘self-knowledge’.” (418) In the end the author expresses his hope that the Trinity “as an internal dialogue” can serve as a model of “accommodation” without losing one’s own identity (419).

Conclusion

This most impressive book is clearly a strong “Habilitationsschrift.” In many parts it has the power of an *opus magnum*. In other parts it can serve as a high-profile textbook for academic teachers and students. It is immensely learned. In some parts one would wish for less spreading of information and knowledge in order to follow more clearly the main lines of argument.

I see limits in the differentiation and the relating between a historically and exegetically grounded christological and a speculative (post)metaphysical trinitarian approach. I see deficits in dealing with the theology of the cross, with the biblical resurrection witnesses and, above all, with the relation of the resurrection and the impact of the Spirit which fulfills Jesus Christ, constitutes his post-Easterly body, is

poured out on his witnesses, constituting the coming and the eternal reign of God.

The author plans a second book on pneumatology and anthropology. If this new book reaches the high level of the present publication and complements it, Petr Gallus will become a leading voice in the international theological research and dialogue. With this book, he establishes himself already as a major voice.