

THE CONCEPT OF THE COMMUNICATION OF THE MAJESTY IN THE THEOLOGY OF MARTIN CHEMNITZ

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Abstract. The concept of the communication of the majesty has been a controversial issue in the Lutheran Christology. In its classical form it was formulated by Martin Chemnitz in the second half of the sixteenth century. The aim of this article is to show that it was not an abstract *ad hoc* construction. According to the theological thinking of Chemnitz it is closely and inseparably connected with other theological ideas. The concept of the communion of the majesty gets its significance and meaning from a wider soteriological framework of which it is an organic part.

Introduction

Christology has been one of the special features of the Lutheran theological tradition that has distinguished it from other theological traditions. This specific Lutheran Christology emerged in the theological controversies among the Protestants in the sixteenth century. There were a number of controversies inside the emerging Protestantism. One of them started as a dispute over the Lord's Supper. The principal issue was the presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament. Soon the argument moved to Christology as the basis of the Eucharistic doctrine. This controversy had both historical and theological implications. Historically the controversy was one of the main reasons of division of the Protestant movement into two main branches – into Lutheran and Calvinist or Reformed traditions. The issues connected with understanding the Eucharist separate the two Protestant traditions even nowadays. Theologically this controversy was the main impetus for conceptualisation and development of the Lutheran Christology. And through Christology it had a considerable influence on the whole of the Lutheran theology and spirituality.¹

¹ At the same time this controversy influenced the development of the reformed theology as well.

Initially the controversy started in the third decade of the sixteenth century as a debate between Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli. *Mutatis mutandis* it continued after Luther's death. According to Luther and his followers the body and blood of Christ are really present in the Eucharist and according to their adversaries, at first Zwingli and later Calvin and his followers, the presence is not real in the same way.

Although after Luther's death Melanchthon became the theological leader of the Protestants he nevertheless tried to avoid a clear confession and did not take a firm position in this subject (Seeberg 1959:509). He agreed that the divinity of Christ was present in the Lord's Supper but he did not believe in the unity of the body of Christ and bread in the Eucharist (Seeberg 1959:447, Lohse 1998:130; Green 1978:211).

At first the main defender of the Lutheran position was Johannes Brenz (1499–1570). For defending the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist he developed a special Christology. According to Brenz the two natures of Christ – his divinity and humanity – are so closely connected that the properties of the divine nature are transferred to Christ's human nature (Brandy 1992:172, 180ff). Among other divine properties the humanity of Christ receives the property of omnipresence. Because of this the body of Christ fills the whole universe. The technical term for the omnipresence of Christ's human nature is *ubiquitas*, ubiquity.² Because of this ubiquity the body and blood of Christ are present in the Eucharist.

The concept of ubiquity was criticised not only by the Reformed adversaries but by a number of Lutheran theologians as well (Lohse 1998:132). One of those was Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586), a former student of Melanchthon who was appointed superintendent in 1567 in Brunswick. He did not accept Brenz's idea of replacement of human properties by divine properties in Christ. For him there are essential properties that are not transferable (Lohse 1998:132). Chemnitz grounded the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist not in the christological consideration but in the words of institution (Ibid.) For Chemnitz the function of Christology was more limited. Its aim was only to demonstrate the possibility of the real presence of the body and blood, not to guarantee the ubiquity of Christ's human nature, the necessary implication of which were the real presence of His body and blood in the Eucharist. In the course of the controversy he developed his own Christology. In 1570 he wrote and published his main christological treatise titled "On the Two Natures in Christ, Concerning Their Hypostatic Union, the Communication of Attributes, and Other Related Questions."³ This work became one of the classical Lutheran Christologies.⁴ As

² About the rather complicated and ambiguous concept of the ubiquity in Brenz cf Brandy (1992:248).

³ "*De duabus naturis in Christo. De hypostatica earum unione: de communicatione idiomatum, qua ea, quae unius naturae propria sunt, tribuuntur personae in concreto. Quomodo utraque natura in Christo, agat cum Communicatione alterius: Quid humana natura in Christo, praeter physica Idiomata ex hypostatica cum divinitate unione acceperit, &c. Explicatio ex scripturae sententijs, & ex purioris antiquitatis testimonijs. Collecta per Martinum Chemnicium D.*", Jena: Ritzenheim, 1570. The second edition: "*De duabus naturis in Christo. De hypostatica earum unione. De communicatione idiomatum et de alijs quaestionibus inde dependentibus. Libellus ex*

Chemnitz was one of the authors of the "Formula of Concord"⁵ so his christological ideas became rather influential in the later developments of the Lutheran theological tradition.

Chemnitz takes as its principal starting point, besides the Scriptures, also the Chalcedonian dogma: "The two natures are inseparably connected (*inseparabili copulatione*) and from them and in them is established (*ad constituendum*) one person in the incarnate Christ, in whom the assumed nature subsists and is sustained (*subsistat & sustentetur*)" (Chemnitz 1971:72; 1690:20). Time and again Chemnitz emphasises the closeness and inseparability of the union.⁶ Because of the intimate personal union the natures are in some way in communion with each other. Through their mutual interpenetration (*περιχώρησις*) there takes place the communication of the attributes of the two natures in Christ. The union is the ground of this communication. Chemnitz gives almost a definition of the concept of the communication of the attributes: "From this union a certain communion results between the united natures and their attributes, not indeed a natural or essential communion but, because of the personal union, a communion like that between the soul and the animated body or between fire and heated iron."⁷ For the

scripturae sententiis & ex purioris antiquitatis testimoniis jam denuo recognitus & retextus per Martinum Chemnicium.", Leipzig: Rambau, 1578, has been translated into English, "The Two Natures in Christ," trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 1971).

- ⁴ "De duabus naturis in Christo" was not the only writing of Chemnitz on this subject. Here could be mentioned among others his "Repetitio sanae doctrinae de vera praesentia corporis et sanguinis in Coena", published in 1561, and especially the short treatise on the doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum* – "Tractatus complectens doctrinam de Communicatione idiomatum", which was added to the work. It shows already the main characteristics of Chemnitz' later conception Christology. In 1568 Chemnitz held a public disputation at the university of Rostock for gaining the doctorate in theology on the "Propositiones, De persona et beneficiis filii Dei, Domini et redemptoris nostri Iesu Christi". In 1571, a year after publishing "De duabus naturis in Christo", Chemnitz reacts very strongly at the attacks of "etliche neue theologi zu Wittenberg" among others also to his statements about the Eucharist and concept of person of Christ, and writes as a report, warning and refutation of the sacramentarian teaching his "Wiederholte christliche gemeine Confession und erklärung". The changing situation makes him in the end to revise his "De duabus naturis in Christo" and republish it in 1578.
- ⁵ According to Seeberg: "Die ganze Christologie der Konkordienformel gibt wesentlich Chemnitz' Lehre wieder." (Seeberg 1959:545.) Against this is Schlink (1954:159). About the role of Chemnitz cf also Teigen (1978:311).
- ⁶ Chemnitz especially emphasises the inseparability of the hypostasis of the Logos and his human nature, their closest and most intimate union. "Because of the personal union ... we cannot correctly or reverently think or believe anything about the person of the Logos outside the union with the assumed nature or apart from it, by Himself or separately. Nor in turn should we think of the assumed nature apart from and without the Logos" (Chemnitz 1971:443). In the Lutheran theological tradition it is generally impossible to treat the divinity *an sich*, to think about God outside the incarnation. (Cf Elert 1958:206f.) Chemnitz stresses that "the human nature which the Son of God once assumed He never lays aside (*deponet*) in all eternity, but the union of the divine and the human natures in Christ will remain forever in perpetual connection (*perpetuo foedere*)" (Chemnitz 1971:64; 1690:17).
- ⁷ Chemnitz uses frequently the analogy of the heated iron for describing the interpenetration of the two natures in Christ (Watson 1994:83).

things which are proper to the natures become the common property of the person on account of the union”⁸ (Chemnitz 1971:72).

In explicating the communication Chemnitz divides it into three genera.⁹ Speaking about the first genus he says that here “that which is proper to one nature is predicated of the person concretely”¹⁰ (Chemnitz 1971:163). This is the result of the fact that in Christ both natures are natures of the one hypostasis or person. Christ is both God and man. What is proper to this man’s human nature is proper to his person as well.¹¹

About the second genus Chemnitz says that “because of the hypostatic union, each nature in Christ, although it has its own properties, yet does not have its own separate actions whereby the divine nature would carry out its activities separately from the humanity or humanity from the deity. But according to the definition of the Council of Chalcedon¹² each nature in Christ ‘performs in communion with the other that which is proper to each’¹³ (Chemnitz 1971:163). So this genus refers to the cooperation of the two natures in the union of the person to the end of the completion of the work of the Mediator. The human nature of Christ does not act independently of the divine nature nor the divine nature independently of the human nature. Christ’s acts as God and as a man are distinct but coordinated.¹⁴

According to Chemnitz “in the third genus we are dealing with those things which are actually (*realiter*) communicated not only to the person but also to the assumed nature itself, not through commingling or equating (*non per confusionem*

⁸ “*Ex qua unione consequitur quaedam inter unitas naturas, & earum idiomata, communio. Non illa quidem physica, aut essentialis, sed pro ratione hypostaticae unionis, qualis est inter animam & corpus animatum, inter ignem & ferrum ignitum, Quae enim propria sunt naturarum, propter hanc unionem fiunt communia personae*” (Chemnitz 1690:20).

⁹ One of the methods that Chemnitz used consisted in dividing complicated things into separate and distinct concepts and classes. He defends his method saying that “the matter itself clearly demonstrates that these categories are distinct and different from one another. A definition cannot help but being upset and obscured if things, which are distinct, are confused and not distinctly explained. Although it is the happy condition of great geniuses that they can in one sentence explain without confusion things which are distinct, yet I shall speak in the method which is best suited for simple people, both for teaching and for learning” (Chemnitz 1971:161).

¹⁰ “*id, quod proprium est unius naturae, praedicatur de persona in concreto*” (Chemnitz 1690:59).

¹¹ The first genus allows for example to say that what Christ “did, suffered, or spoke as a man He also truly did, suffered, and spoke as the eternal God” (Chemnitz 1971:191). “The eternal God” means here the divine hypostasis of Christ.

¹² Actually this quotation is from the Epitome of Leo (DS 294).

¹³ “*propter hypostaticam unionem, quaelibet naturarum in Christo, licet habeat proprias, non tamen [habet] separatas suas actiones, ita ut divina sua separatim agat sine humanitate, & humana suas separatas habeat actiones, sine Divinitate. Sed iuxta Chalcedonensis Concilii definitionem, utraque natura agit in communicatione alterius, quod cujusque proprium est.*” (1570:N2a; 1690: 60). Preus’ translation is somewhat misleading – Chemnitz speaks here of proper, peculiar actions (*proprias actiones*) to divine and human nature in Christ, not of their properties.

¹⁴ So, for example, according to Chemnitz in performing miracles Christ’s human nature acted in the human way and his divine nature acted in the divine way. There was a human act and a divine act. But these two were coordinated and the result was one miracle (Chemnitz 1971:219).

aut exaequationem), to be sure, but as a result of the union”¹⁵ (Chemnitz 1971:165; 1690:60). Chemnitz explains it saying that “the assumed human nature in Christ not only has and retains its own natural properties, but above, beyond, and in addition to its essential properties, because of the hypostatic union with the divine nature of the Logos (while the substance of the humanity remains intact and also keeps its essential attributes unimpaired), it also is adorned and enriched with and increased and exalted by innumerable and excellent prerogatives, pre-eminences, dignities, and excellencies (or whatever you may wish to call them) which are above every name that is named not only in this life but in the life to come”¹⁶ (Chemnitz 1971:164). Time and again Chemnitz emphasises that the humanity of Christ does not possess these divine attributes by virtue of its own nature, they are not essential attributes but only gifts and they do not belong to the human nature outside the hypostatic union¹⁷ (e. g., Chemnitz 1971:269, 324).

The concept of the third genus, the communication of the majesty has been and still is the stumbling block for the relations between the Reformed and the Lutheran traditions. The Reformed theologians accept in principle the first genus and in a certain way the second genus, but the third is for them unacceptable (Muller 1985:74). This part of the Lutheran Christology has been criticised in history not only by the Reformed but also by other traditions.¹⁸ This concept, however, has been sometimes a stumbling block inside the Lutheran theological tradition as well. Thus speaking about the Lutheran doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*, Paul Althaus asserts that it is a metaphysical theory that damages the humanity of Christ (Althaus 200).

Is the concept of the *communicatio idiomatum* as it is understood by Chemnitz a metaphysical theory in the sense of an abstract and detached construction as think Althaus and others? Does this concept as understood by Chemnitz do justice to the human reality of Christ or does this concept turn the humanity of Christ into something that is in principle different from our humanity? Is this concept just an *ad hoc* theoretical construction invented for explaining the Lutheran idea of the

¹⁵ And Chemnitz continues: “This communication is not mutual or reciprocal, as in the first genus, for since nothing is either added to or subtracted from the divine nature of Christ as a result of the hypostatic union, only His human nature receives and possesses innumerable things because of this union.” Thus the third genus of the communication of attributes is not symmetrical.

¹⁶ “*Assumpta vero humana in Christo natura, non tantum habet & retinet physica sua Idiomata, sed praeter, supra, & ultra essentiales suas proprietates, ex hypostatica illa cum divina natura λογῶν unione, salva manente substantia humanitatis, salvis etiam manentibus essentialibus ipsius proprietatibus, ornatur, augetur, locupletatur, & exaltatur, innumerabilibus & excellentissimis, ultra omne nomen, quod nominatur non tantum in hoc, verum etiam in futuro seculo, praerogativis, praeeminentis, excellentiis, dignitatibus, aut quibuscunque vocabulis illa appellare quis velit*” (Chemnitz 1690:60).

¹⁷ According to Chemnitz the attributes or qualities are not transferable outside the divine nature or separable from the nature (Chemnitz 1971:304). “The attributes of the Deity are not accidental qualities (*accidentia*) in the subject, but in simple terms are the very essence of God, with whom they are interchangeable (*convertuntur*) because they are one and the same thing “ (Chemnitz 1971:269; 1690:103).

¹⁸ Thus for example by Ott (1974:160).

real presence in Eucharist or is it an organic element of the whole theology of Chemnitz? In this article we limit the scope of this question to the third genus of the *communicatio* and try to look at the role of this genus according to the theological thinking of Chemnitz. But before we go to the special treatment of the *genus majesticum* we shall take a quick look at the theological method of Chemnitz.

About the theological method of Chemnitz

The question of the theological method of Chemnitz is a complicated and wide issue and it is impossible to treat it here thoroughly. In this essay we therefore pay attention only to one aspect of his method that seems to be characteristic and relevant. There are a number of places where Chemnitz says that either we have to start or we have to content with the effects or results of a divine act. Thus speaking about the personal union he says that “because it is beyond all controversy that this union is a great mystery (*magnum mysterium*), the passages of Scripture often describe it by noting the things which result (*consequuntur*) from the union in the person of the incarnate Christ, just as in other matters it is common in the description of many things to show the effects and the consequences (*notationes ex effectis & consequentibus*). Therefore we cannot in a formal way fully understand or investigate the mystery of this union in the darkness and infirmity of our minds, the testimonies of Scripture ... lead us to the consideration of those things which result from and arise out of this union in Christ (*quae unionem hanc in Christo consequuntur, & quae inde oriuntur*)” (Chemnitz 1971:80f; 1690:25). That means that a human being is not able to penetrate behind the effects of divine acts and we have to be content with them.

But for Chemnitz the results and effects that are described in Scripture are not neutral things, which one can study merely out of human curiosity. They are phenomena that have bearing to human beings that have practical relevance. Thus speaking about the incarnation Chemnitz says that “we should not dispute idly concerning the divine nature in Christ, but we ought also to think about the use of this doctrine (*usus hujus doctrinae*)” (Chemnitz 1971:44; 1690:8). And some lines later he adds: “We shall not look a priori, so to speak, into the secret council of the Trinity, but because the Trinity willed that only the Son of God should become man for us, we shall consider a posteriori what sweet consolations (*dulces consolationes*) our faith may derive and draw from the fact that the Second Person of the Trinity, the Word, did become flesh” (Ibid).¹⁹ Thus according to Martin Chemnitz the aim of his theology is to speak about the effects of God’s acts and

¹⁹ Cf, “I want to reiterate the point which I have made frequently that we must not dispute with curious and subtle arguments concerning the secret and ineffable union by which the divine and human natures have been joined together in the person of Christ, but rather we must see with our partial understanding on the basis of God’s Word how this entire doctrine can be used in the serious and true exercise of faith” (Chemnitz 1971:147).

about their soteriological relevance. Or in his words, we have to speak first of all about the use of the doctrine. We can speak about the personal union only in connection with soteriology. The following statement is typical of Chemnitz: “It is certain that the Son of God assumed a human nature chiefly for two reasons (*causas*): (1) that He might redeem and free it from the wrath of God, from condemnation, and from eternal death; and (2) that, corrupted and depraved by sin as it is, He might refashion and restore (*repararet & restitueret*) it first in Himself, and that from Himself as the Head there might come to us who are His members cleansing, sanctification, and renewal (*sanatio, sanctificatio seu renovatio*)” (Chemnitz 1971:60; 1690:15).²⁰ So Chemnitz distinguishes two aspects in soteriology. The first aspect is described by the concept of redemption. Here Chemnitz follows the general soteriological idea that was dominating in the West at least since Anselm of Canterbury.²¹ Redemption has been achieved through Christ’s suffering and death because our sins demand satisfaction.²² According to Chemnitz God the Father laid upon Christ “the sins and penalties which were brought about by the sins of the whole world, and He poured out all His wrath upon Him. He was made a curse for us” (Chemnitz 1971:62).²³ Incarnation and the hypostatic union are inseparably connected with God’s saving work.

The other aspect of soteriology in Chemnitz is connected with renovation of human beings, i. e., with the intrinsic change of human beings. This is the application of the results of the first soteriological act, of redemption to particular human beings. There is a number of places in Chemnitz where he speaks about the communication of “the divine blessings (*divina dona*)” to us. This communication occurs through the human nature of Christ. Thus he says that in the incarnation Christ united the two natures “in order that the grace, truth, life, and salvation from which we had been alienated might be brought near to us (*propinquissima nobis fierent*) and bestowed (*deposita*) upon this human nature of ours, which the Son of God assumed” (Chemnitz 1971:97; 1690:32). Speaking about Christ Chemnitz says that “He restored even the powers which our nature had lost because of sin, and in Himself He first repaired and renewed the powers which had been corrupted through sin. And through Himself He bestowed upon the human race this renewal and restoration (*recuperatio & reparatio*), which begins in this life and finds its completion in the future life” (Chemnitz 1971:239; 1690:90). This is sanctification. Restoration of humanity and sanctification means for him “communion and fellowship with the divine nature (*communio & consortium divinae naturae*)” (Chemnitz 1971:472; 1690:196).

²⁰ Cf Chemnitz 1971:98, 472.

²¹ Although Chemnitz uses Anselmian terminology, his soteriology nevertheless follows Luther rather than Anselm. About the key differences between the soteriologies of Anselm of Canterbury and Luther cf. Althaus (1966:203).

²² Actually there is another aspect in his doctrine of redemption as well. We shall treat it below.

²³ In his “*Loci Theologici*” Chemnitz says that “God has set forth His Son as our Mediator, made under the Law, for which He has made satisfaction both by bearing our sins and by His perfect Obedience” (Chemnitz 1989:530).

Thus according to Chemnitz we have an access to a divine act through or in connection with the results of this act. In the case of the incarnation one can say that it is understandable in the context of Christ's soteriological work. Or to put it into the terms of the theological method: the concept of the hypostatic union belongs to the wider theological framework. And this wider framework is largely determined by soteriological ideas.

The framework of the concept of the communication of the majesty

Now the question is whether the concept of the communication of the majesty is connected with God's soteriological acts according to Chemnitz. Or to put it in other words: does Chemnitz follow the method described in the preceding section? Does he elucidate the concept of the communication of the majesty with the help of soteriological considerations?

In his book "The Two Natures in Christ" Chemnitz does not give an elaborated doctrine of redemption. Nevertheless at closer look we can discern in his thinking two trends of understanding the redemption: (1) Christ's victory over the powers of evil (e. g., Chemnitz 1971:71) and (2) Christ's taking the punishments for our sins upon himself and making satisfaction²⁴ (e. g., Chemnitz 1971:147). In both cases the Logos acts through his human nature and with the help of his human nature. Thus mentioning the saving works of Christ Chemnitz says that he "crushes the serpent's head, and breaks and destroys the kingdom and power of Satan" (Chemnitz 1971:335). And shortly afterwards he adds that Christ completes these works "in communion (*cum communione*) with His assumed human nature, in, with, and through which (*in qua, cum qua, & per quam*) the divine power of the Logos carries on, performs, and accomplishes His works" (ibid.; 1690:134).

About making satisfaction Chemnitz speaks a little bit more. Thus speaking about the flesh²⁵ of Christ he says that "as a victim it is given into death for the life of the world" (Chemnitz 1971:332). Commenting on Scripture Chemnitz says: "Not that the blood of Christ of and through itself or by itself, in the abstract, has the power to forgive sins, for this is the office of the entire person according to both natures. But it [Scripture] expressly mentions the blood of Christ so that we may understand that Christ's assumed nature also has this power and is not excluded from it. The Epistle to the Hebrews (9:12–14) shows that the blood of Christ therefore has the power of cleansing sins, namely, that through the eternal Spirit, that is through His eternal divinity, He has offered His body and blood to God" (Chemnitz 1971:334).

Thus in both cases Christ's humanity takes part in the act of redemption. It takes part not only in a way that is natural for humanity. For being able to destroy evil and

²⁴ About these two soteriological options cf Aulen 1950. These two conceptions must not necessarily exclude one another. Cf. Althaus 1966:209f, 220–223.

²⁵ According to the Christian tradition Chemnitz uses the word "flesh" in the meaning of the whole human being. Cf Chemnitz 1989:109.

for being able to be a meritorious offering to God humanity must have divine qualities.²⁶ Chemnitz does not give explicit and detailed explanation how he understands the activity of the divine powers in human nature in redemption. He only asserts that the Logos “was also present (*adfiuit*) with the suffering nature, and by His power and activity He caused it to be able to bear the wrath of God which was poured out upon the person, and through the suffering to conquer sin, the devil, death, and the wrath and curse of God, with the result that there was a kind of alliance (συμμοχία) between the divine and human natures in the work of our redemption” (Chemnitz 1971:224; 1690:84).²⁷ Thus the communication of the majesty is in a way the precondition for Christ’s redeeming work as understood by Chemnitz.

Chemnitz speaks about various aspects of the communication of “the divine blessings” (*divina dona*) to men by Christ. One of them is described and explained in terms of manifestation. “The divine nature reveals itself through the assumed nature” (Chemnitz 1971:325). According to Chemnitz “the whole fullness of deity dwells personally in the assumed nature, not with a simple, bare, or general presence only, as it dwells in the saints and angels, but in such a way that the entire deity shines forth in the assumed human nature; and the humanity in a sense glows with this light and is united with the Logos²⁸” (Chemnitz 1971:292). Thus the human nature being illuminated is itself illuminating, in a way it is itself a source of the divine radiance.²⁹ As an example of this kind of radiation by the human nature Chemnitz points to the transfiguration of Christ in Matt 17:2. “In the transfiguration the rays of divine glory shine from the body of Christ”³⁰ (Chemnitz 1971:80). As the humanity of Christ is not able to radiate the divine glory itself,

²⁶ According to Chemnitz “in order that the assumed human nature might be able to cooperate (*cooperari*) in these activities, it not only possesses its own natural properties or infused created gifts, but it has the true, divine majesty and power of the Logos personally united with it, with which it has personal communion, using this majesty and power for its own acts of cooperation in these works” (Chemnitz 1971:335; 1690:134).

²⁷ In redemption Chemnitz pays more attention to the active role of the divinity. One reason for the neglect of elaborated demonstration of the cooperation of humanity with the divine majesty may be in the fact that at least according to Chemnitz’s understanding the Scholastic tradition had already recognised the role of Christ’s humanity in redemption that is above the limits of human essential abilities (Chemnitz 1971:473).

²⁸ “*Tota enim plenitudo Deitatis per unionem personaliter inhabitat in assumpta natura, non simplici, nuda aut generali tantum praesentia, vel sicut in sanctis & angelis inhabitat. Sed ita, ut tota in assumpta natura luceat, & humanitas quasi accensa lumine, unita sit λόγῳ*” (Chemnitz 1690:114).

²⁹ According to Chemnitz this does not mean that the human nature of Christ is really and in itself the ultimate source of the divine radiance. He explains this with the help of one of his favourite figures: as fire makes iron to glow and radiate light because it “penetrates, permeates, and embraces heated iron” so the divine nature in Christ penetrates and permeates his humanity and causes it to illuminate. In contemporary terms we can say that the heated iron emits light as it gets energy from heating, i. e., iron does not radiate its intrinsic energy.

³⁰ Here Chemnitz is rather close to the Eastern Orthodox understanding of Christ’s transfiguration. Cf Lossky (1985:60f).

therefore in the personal union it receives this ability. This manifestation of the divinity through Christ's humanity is not a manifestation of something static. For Chemnitz it is rather a manifestation of acts or works. So he says that "the assumed humanity possesses personally, united to itself, the attributes of the divine Logos in such a way that the attributes show their activities in and through the humanity (*in illa, & per illam operationes suas exerant*)" (Chemnitz 1971:309; 1690:122).

As was said above, the christological controversy inside the developing Protestantism started from the diverging views on the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Therefore Chemnitz could not avoid this issue in his treatment of the two natures of Christ. The presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper is, according to Chemnitz, not a matter of christological considerations. It is rather a matter of trusting Christ's promises, i. e., the words of institution. The concept of the communication of the majesty only explains its possibility. Christ's human nature receives the divine ability to be wherever Christ wills it to be.³¹ Chemnitz says that Christ in his humanity "can be present wherever He wills to be, not according to the natural or essential properties of His body but by reason of and through the efficacy of the majesty of God (*ratione & efficacia majestatis ac virtutis Dei*), at whose right hand He sits" (Chemnitz 1971:447; 1690:185).

According to Chemnitz Christ's human nature is not only present in the Lord's Supper but it has a special quality that belongs essentially only to God. Christ's humanity has the power of vivification. So Chemnitz asserts that "the flesh of Christ on account of the union with the divine nature, which is life itself, is made life-giving (*vivifica*) or a life-giver (*ζωοποιόν, vivificatrix*), and it thus has the authority or power to give life (*virtutem seu vim vivificandi*), and this authority it exercises in the action of the Lord's Supper in the believers" (Chemnitz 1971:474; 1690:197). In his defence of the life-giving activity of Christ's body Chemnitz relies heavily on Cyril of Alexandria.³² And like Cyril, he also speaks about our bodies becoming like Christ's body, i. e., becoming partakers of the divine glory³³ (e. g., Chemnitz 1971:41, 51, 54). This means that the life-giving is not just a

³¹ According to him "since the Son of God in the institution of His covenant has taught, promised, and affirmed the presence of His body and blood in His Supper wherever it is celebrated in the church on earth according to His institution, therefore the doctrine of the personal union shows with definite word and particular promise, as the words of His testament declare in their simple, proper, and native sense that for the Son of God it is not only possible but even easy for Him to will, to effect, and to manifest the presence of His body which is promised in His Word." (Chemnitz 1971:446f.)

³² Cf Chemnitz 1971:299ff, 368–372. On the defence of the life-giving ability of Christ's human flesh Chemnitz refers frequently also to the Council of Ephesus (e. g., Chemnitz 1971:331,473f). But actually even here he is quoting Cyril's "The Twelve Anathemas against Nestorius" (cf DS 262.) About Cyril's conception of the Eucharist cf Russell (2000:19f).

³³ But unlike Cyril, Chemnitz does not use the term "deification" (*θεοποίησις*) "because of the Eutychian controversies and the ravings of Schwenkfeld, which have been spread abroad in our time in regard of the conversion and equation of the natures, the term 'deification' has already become unsuitable, and I would not want to restore the use of this term, for it would require a long explanation and a warning" (Chemnitz 1971:396; 1690:161).

restoration of a physical life but rather a sanctification or transformation of human life. So the humanity of Christ receives the ability to give life and to sanctify.

For Chemnitz Christ's presence is not limited by the Lord's Supper. According to him Christ is present generally in the church. He is present as the head of the church. Chemnitz says that "not the least part of the work of Christ as our mediator and Savior is that as Head He is present with His members, gathering, ruling, defending, preserving, and saving His church" (Chemnitz 1971:423). For Chemnitz this presence is not only a presence of Christ's divine nature. It is presence of the whole Christ. "But Christ is our Head, not only according to His divine nature but also according to that nature by which He is akin to us as His members and of the same substance with us" (Chemnitz 1971:452). This presence in the church is not a passive presence for the sake of the presence. This is rather an active and saving presence. Thus Chemnitz asserts that "Christ promises to His church, moreover, not only a mere inactive presence, but rather a presence in which He is active and efficacious (*operetur & efficax sit*), which gives an increase, so that the work of the apostles is not in vain; a presence which defends the ministry against its enemies, which converts the hearers, justifies, sanctifies, governs, and saves them, and the like" (Chemnitz 1971:449; 1690:186). And the humanity of Christ is involved in this activity.³⁴ Time and again Chemnitz emphasises that Christ accomplishes these works in, through and with his human nature. The humanity of Christ receives the divine qualities for fulfilling this work in the church.

Chemnitz goes even further. He does not limit his assertions about the presence of Christ's humanity with the Eucharist and with the church. According to him Christ is present with both of his natures in all creatures (Chemnitz 1971:449,463) and all things are subject to Christ according to his both natures.³⁵ And again his human nature is able to fulfil this function thanks to the communication of the majesty. But as this knowledge is not, according to Chemnitz, related to Christ's saving activity, therefore he refuses to discuss it. It is thus not a question of Christology or of theology in general. He asserts that "since we do not have express and definite promise that He wills to be sought and found in such places, and since these things add nothing to the edification or comfort of the church and are plain offenses which disturb the weak and give the adversaries occasion for endless controversy, it is safest and simplest to drop all such questions from our discussion and to limit ourselves to the boundaries of divine revelation so that we may seek Christ and lay hold of Him in the places where He has clearly promised that He Himself wishes to be" (Chemnitz 1971:463).

³⁴ "... as the work must be understood according to both natures, so is the presence of the person in this work" (Chemnitz 1971:449).

³⁵ "Christ's human nature ... cannot and ought not be removed or excluded from the general dominion which He possesses and exercises over all things, or from the administration of the world, since Scripture expressly affirms that all things, even those which are outside the church have been put under Christ's feet" (Chemnitz 1971:462).

In the saving works of Christ his both natures are involved. Although “the divine nature of the Logos acts as the principal agent in these functions” (Chemnitz 1971:334) nevertheless it does not occur outside his human nature. In some way the human nature of Christ is a medium or channel through which God contacts human beings. Chemnitz says about Christ that “through (*per*) His assumed humanity, as through the organ (*organon*) which is akin to us, as the fathers put it, He wills to bestow His benefits on us, to confirm and seal them, and thus to accomplish in the church His work of giving us life, according to each nature, through His life-giving flesh” (Chemnitz 1971:434; 1690:178).³⁶ In another place Chemnitz specifies the role of Christ’s human nature as an “organ” saying that “in this ministration, activity, and fulfillment the divine nature of the Son of God works in communion (*cum communione*) with His assumed nature, not in the way that water flows through a tube, but with the cooperation (*cum cooperatione*) of the assumed nature, which, in order that it may cooperate in these duties, possesses (*habet*) not only its own natural attributes, nor only created gifts, but also the entire fullness of the Godhead” (Chemnitz 1971:315; 1690:124). This means that the humanity of Christ is not a mere passive instrument in these actions. To be able to cooperate one has to be at least in a certain measure an independent agent. In the words of Chemnitz Christ’s humanity is “a kind of secondary cause” (Chemnitz 1971:255) or a secondary agent.³⁷

Thus Christ’s victory over death, his redeeming satisfaction, his manifestation of the divinity, his presence in the Lord’s Supper and more generally in the church and vivification of human beings occurs in, through and with his human nature. His human nature is involved in acts that are not essentially human. The communication of the majesty enables it to cooperate in these acts. And on the other hand the soteriological ideas of Chemnitz are not abstract. The particular, concrete and historical man Jesus of Nazareth is always involved in God saving acts. According to Chemnitz he can participate in this activity thanks to the communication of the majesty.

The meaning of the communication of the majesty in Chemnitz

The soteriological acts of Christ described by Martin Chemnitz are the results of the communication of majesty or are at least conditioned by it. So has Chemnitz

³⁶ The reason why God needs an intermediary is that according to the traditional theology that Chemnitz is following, a creature cannot contact directly with the deity (Chemnitz 1971:445). Being consubstantial with humanity Christ’s human nature belongs to the created finite world and at the same time through the personal union Christ’s human nature pertains personally to the Trinity (Chemnitz 1971:404). Belonging to both it can bridge the unbridgeable abyss.

³⁷ Following the Scholastic tradition he says that “when two agents have one purpose (*ἀποτέλεσμα*), one is the principal and the other is the secondary, organic, or instrumental agent; for the action or *ἀποτέλεσμα* is rightly attributed not only to the principal agent but also to the secondary or organic agent” (Chemnitz 1971:290).

understood the connection between them. That means that in the Christology of Chemnitz the concept of the communication of the majesty belongs to the soteriological framework.³⁸ This concept is inseparable from a number of other theological concepts. The abolition or change of this concept would change also the ideas of redemption and sanctification in the theology of Chemnitz.

The close connection between the concept of the communication of the majesty and the soteriological ideas in the theology of Chemnitz allows us to make some statement about this concept.

According to Chemnitz, the communication is dynamic. The communication occurs in terms of an act.³⁹ As we saw above the communication is not static. The divine “attributes show their activities in and through the humanity.” The dynamic character of the communication of the majesty appears also in the fact that it occurs only according to the will of Christ. We may say that the concept of the communication of majesty does not denote so much a being but rather an event. In this event the humanity receives the divine attributes. These attributes or qualities do not belong to it habitually and essentially. They belong to it only in the context of act. They do not belong to it outside of the act. They only become its attributes. The human nature receives the divine attributes but does not possess them. The communication of the majesty is not being, it is rather becoming. It is an aspect of God’s act with his creature.

In this act the humanity of Christ is not a passive instrument. On the contrary, the divine properties that the humanity receives enable him to participate in God’s acts. Although he is secondary agent, nevertheless he is agent. For Chemnitz, Christ’s humanity cooperates with his divinity even in being the head of the church. The fact that Christ’s human nature receives the divine qualities for cooperating in the divine act helps to explain why the third genus of the communication is a one-way movement from the divinity to the humanity, why the communication is not symmetrical, why there is no need for the *genus tapeinoticon* in the Christology of Chemnitz. Christ’s divinity acts through, in and with his humanity and not vice versa.

³⁸ Cf Hägglund 1980:72

³⁹ Chemnitz almost defines this sort of communication with the help of his understanding of Christ’s activity. He asserts that “the communication of the majesty is the name we give to the fact that beside and above those essential properties which remain in the humanity, the divine power of the Logos, whenever He wills, accomplishes with and through the assumed human nature whatever things He wishes, things which are not of the essence of the flesh or of its essential properties (*Communicationem Majestatis appellamus, quod praeter & supra manentes essentialia illas humanitatis proprietates divina potentia λόγου operatur, cum assumpta humanitate, & per eam, quaecunque & quandocunque vult, quae non sunt essentiae carnis, vel essentialium ejus proprietatum*)” (Chemnitz 1971:278; 1690:107). According to Mahlmann in the theology of Chemnitz not only the communication of attributes but the whole hypostatic union is understandable in terms of act. “Nur von der im Zeugnis greifbaren Bestimmtheit des Gotteshandelns aus kann das Personensein Jesu mit Gott bestimmt werden. ... Die Personseinheit muss dann verstanden werden als der Vorgang, dass dieses bestimmten Menschen Tun Teilnahme an Gottes Tun ist” (Mahlmann 1969:231).

All the divine properties that are communicated to the humanity of Christ are in one or in another way soteriologically relevant. The acts of God in which the creature, i. e., the humanity of Christ partakes are for the benefit of the creature. A typical example is the communication of the ability to vivify a human being to the human nature of Christ. In the framework of the theological thinking of Chemnitz the communication of the majesty is something that concerns human beings. According to his understanding there would be no redemption and no renewal of human life if Christ's human nature had not taken part in those processes, if it had not been able to take part. The leading motive is not theoretical or metaphysical interest. Its motive is rather soteriological or existential interest. According to Chemnitz, "there ought not be idle logomachies over the presence of the whole Christ in the church according to each nature, but rather we should consider what useful, pleasant, and precious comfort (*utiles, jucundae ac dulces consolationes*) we derive and can find in the fact that the Son of God wills to be present with His church" (Chemnitz 1971:471; 1690:196).

Although Chemnitz avoids metaphysical explanations of the communion, it is nevertheless inescapable to have some kind of image of it. Sometimes Chemnitz imagined the communication of the majesty in terms of manifestation. The communication is the manifestation of the divinity through Christ's humanity. Or we can say that the communication means that the humanity has been made absolutely transparent for the divinity.

If we separate Chemnitz's concept of the communication of the majesty from its soteriological context, then it becomes a metaphysical theory. But the aim of Chemnitz was not to elaborate or to present a metaphysical theory of the two natures in Christ – a theory about their interrelations and interactions. The communication of the majesty is a concept that has meaning only in the soteriological context. Therefore the concept of the communication of the majesty is an organic element of the whole theology of Chemnitz. In the context of Chemnitz's soteriology it does not damage the humanity of Christ because this soteriology demands the preservation of the principal humanity of Christ.⁴⁰ Outside of this soteriological framework, i. e., taken *an sich*, in itself, as an isolated concept it becomes a metaphysical theory that is not relevant to Christian life.⁴¹ But it is the same with the classical Christian doctrines, i. e., with the doctrine of the Trinity and with the Chalcedonian Christology. The theological assertions of Athanasius, of Cyril of Alexandria, of Leo the Great and of others had their roots in soteriology. If these doctrines are eradicated from this ground they become pure and meaningless metaphysical constructions. And it is the same with the concept of the communication of the majesty of Martin Chemnitz. If these

⁴⁰ Had not Christ's humanity been a human nature as ours, then it would not have been able to realise its mediatorial role. Commenting on the christological controversies of the sixteenth century, Bromiley asserts that for both sides their concern was soteriological and therefore according to them "only a human Mediator, in truly human form and representing humanity, can give revelation, make reconciliation, and ensure resurrection" (Bromiley 1991:104).

⁴¹ And in this case there is a danger of damaging the real humanity of Christ.

concepts and doctrines do not have existential meaning for us, if we cannot see “what useful, pleasant, and precious comfort we can derive and can find” in these concepts, if they have become for us “idle logomachies,” then one is justified in asking whether we have not lost a wider and deeper understanding of Christianity.

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