The Incarnation and Jesus' Apparent Limitation in Knowledge

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Abstract

One of the problems confronting the doctrine of the Incarnation concerns Jesus' apparent limitation in knowledge. This paper assesses various constructive proposals by modern theologians and philosophers, focusing on three of the most widely discussed solutions, namely Ontological Kenoticism, Two Consciousnesses Model, and Divine Subconscious Model. I argue that despite recent work done on the first two, the difficulties of avoiding the implication that the Logos ceased to be divine (for the first) and the implication of Nestorianism (for the second) remain. I conclude that the most promising solution is to defend Functional Kenoticism and develop the Divine Subconscious Model.

1. Introduction

One of the problems confronting the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God concerns Jesus' knowledge. The Incarnation is traditionally understood as the metaphysical union between true divinity and true humanity in the one person of Jesus Christ.[1] However, being divine seems to entail being omniscient, but the New Testament portrays Jesus as being apparently limited in knowledge. For example, according to Mark 13:32 Jesus said 'But of that day or hour (of the future coming of the Son of Man) no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son (i.e. Jesus), but the Father alone.' This seems to imply that Jesus was ignorant of something, namely the timing of the Son of Man's future coming. It seems logically impossible that any single individual could be omniscient on the one hand, and be limited in knowledge on the other.

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[1] Adapted from Gerald O'Collins, 'The Incarnation: The Critical Issues', in Stephen Davis, Daniel Kendall and Gerald O'Collins (eds.), *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 1–3, 6–7.

Throughout the centuries, sceptics have attacked the doctrine of the Incarnation on this point, and many theologians have responded by explaining that Jesus was ignorant *qua* human but omniscient *qua* divine. This is the reduplication strategy widely used by medieval school theologians such as Thomas Aquinas.[2] The problem with this strategy is that it is in itself inadequate, for it does not demonstrate *in what sense* was Jesus ignorant *qua* human but omniscient *qua* divine ('did he have a divine mind apart from his ignorant human mind?').[3] Marmodoro and Hill point out that

'An important advance in recent work on the incarnation 'has been the recognition that the reduplicative strategy, in itself, operates only at the linguistic level...It is a way of avoiding ascribing explicitly inconsistent properties to Christ. It is not, in itself, a metaphysical strategy. It does not tell us *how* or *why* Christ avoids having inconsistent properties, or how this is compatible with his being fully divine and fully human. To do that, the defender of the reduplicative strategy must go beyond mere reduplication and into metaphysics, to show why the use of this language is legitimate.'[4]

Many theologians have indeed gone 'into metaphysics', as Marmodoro and Hill suggested, and their proposals include the following:

1. Affirm that the incarnate Logos was omniscient when he apparently evinced ignorance, in which case either

   1.1. He had more than one consciousness: the ignorance only affected his human consciousness but did not affect his divine consciousness, which remained omniscient.
   1.2. He had one consciousness.

2. Deny that the incarnate Logos was omniscient when he apparently evinced ignorance, and deny that being divine entails being omniscient. Proponents of this proposal would dispense with the need for the reduplication strategy altogether.

In the literature, the approach which denies that Jesus was omniscient is taken by a particular form of Kenotic Model (specifically

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[2] For recent discussions, see Richard Cross, 'Incarnation', in Thomas Flint and Michael Rea (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), and Marilyn Adams, *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), ch. 5.

[3] Stump defends a two-minds interpretation of Aquinas in Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003), ch. 14. The two-minds account will be discussed in later sections.

[4] Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (eds.), *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 5–6.

Ontological Kenoticism), while 1.1 is taken by Two Consciousnesses Model and 1.2 is taken by Divine Subconscious Model. These three models are the most widely discussed solutions in recent literature, and they will be assessed in turn.

Before I proceed, it is important to note that the purpose of these models, as I understand it here, is not to construct a comprehensive and actual 'psychology' of Jesus (indeed, I do not pretend to know exactly the psychology of Jesus), but to address the problem of apparent incoherence concerning omniscience and Jesus' apparently limited knowledge. To accomplish this task, all that is required is not to provide an actual model of the incarnation ('It *was* like this...'), but to provide a possible model to show how it is not impossible that omniscience and Jesus' apparently limited knowledge coexist in the same person ('It *could have been* like this...').[5] It is evident that to show how this is not impossible a degree of conjecture is justified. To elaborate on this point, it needs to be highlighted that the sceptic who objects to the coherence of the incarnation is making a very strong claim: he/she is claiming that even an omnipotent God cannot make the Scriptural account of the incarnation happen. To rebut such a strong claim, all that the Christian has to do is to suggest a model that could possibly be true of the incarnation and which is defensible and then say, 'for all we know, this is what the incarnation could have been like'. The sceptic would then need to bear the burden of proof to exclude these possibilities in order to claim that the incarnation is incoherent.

In the following sections, it will be shown that, despite the large amount of work done on these models recently, all forms of *Ontological* Kenotic Model and Two Consciousnesses Model are beset with serious difficulties: for Ontological Kenoticism, the implication (despite claims by many of its proponents to the contrary) that the Logos ceased to be divine at the incarnation; for Two Consciousnesses Models, the implication (despite claims to the contrary) of Nestorianism. I shall argue that the most promising solution is to develop further the *Functional* Kenotic/ Divine Subconscious Model.

2. Kenotic Model

Kenotic Christology refers to a distinctive model which arose in the context of the heightening of historical critical methodology during the 19th century, as an apologetic attempt within the bounds of

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[5] This point concerning actual model and the need for possible models is made in Andrew Loke, 'On the Coherence of the Incarnation: the Divine Preconscious Model,' *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*, 51 (2009), pp. 51–52.

Chalcedonian orthodoxy to construe the person of Christ in his historical and unitive integrity.[6] It is the view that, in becoming incarnate, the Logos 'emptied himself' (*ekenosen*) of certain divine attributes in order to become truly human.[7] Prominent advocates in the 19th and early 20th century include Gottfried Thomasius, Wolfgang Friedrich Gess, Hugh Ross Mackintosh, Charles Gore, and P.T. Forsyth. Recent defenders include Brian Hebblethwaite, Stephen Evans, Stephen Davis, and Ronald Feenstra.[8]

In a useful classification, Oliver Crisp proposes that Kenotic Christology can be subdivided into ontological and functional Kenoticism.[9]

Ontological Kenoticism can be subdivided into i) 'strong ontological Kenoticism', which claims that at the Incarnation the Word relinquishes his divinity altogether,[10] and ii) standard ontological account, which claims that the Word relinquishes certain divine properties.[11] By contrast, Functional Kenoticism defends the much weaker claim that the Incarnation involves the Word not exercising certain divine properties.[12] These theories will be discussed in turn below. But before this is done, it should be noted that defenders of Kenotic Christology are not always as clear as they might be about whether they are defending an ontological or a merely functional account of the doctrine'.[13] For example, Gore seems to be affirming a functional kenosis by speaking of Christ as not exercising divine attributes such as omniscience,[14] but others have observed that Gore wavers between a theory of divine abandonment and self-limitation.[15] Furthermore,

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[6] Thomas Thompson, 'Nineteenth-Century Kenotic Christology: the Waxing, Waning, and Weighing of a Quest for a Coherent Orthodoxy', in C. Stephen Evans (ed.), *Exploring Kenotic Christology: the Self-emptying of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 76–77.

[7] Oliver Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 118.

[8] Thompson, 'Nineteenth-Century Kenotic Christology', p. 102.

[9] Oliver Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 118–147.

[10] Ibid, pp. 119–120.

[11] Ibid, p. 122. Crisp also notes what he calls the standard-plus ontological account, which states that the Logos never resumes divine attributes abdicated at the Incarnation (ibid, pp. 122,134).

[12] Ibid, p. 120.

[13] Ibid, p. 144n.43, citing Evans as an example.

[14] E.g. Charles Gore, *The Incarnation of the Son of God* (London: J. Murray, 1891), p. 159.

[15] Alan Torrance, 'Jesus in Christian Doctrine', in Markus Bockmuehl (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 212–213. A more consistent Functional Kenoticist is Frank Weston .Weston states that the Kenotic position is not satisfactory, but the Kenotic position which he rejects is a position which affirms that the Logos abandoned his divine properties at the incarnation, i.e. *Ontological* Kenoticism. By contrast, Weston affirms that the Logos remained in possession of his powers at the incarnation, but in the sphere of the incarnation exercised a law of 'self restraint' the measure of which was the growing capacity of the human nature to receive,

some theologians appear at times to count certain Christological positions as Kenotic, but these positions are actually closer to other Christological models and are not true versions of Kenoticism.[16] With the greater historical distance from its 'classic' expression, the term Kenoticism is able to bear a notable revision to meaning, and it is now applied to various Christological projects which differ significantly from the intent and strictures of its 19th century advocates.[17]

Let us begin our discussion of the Kenotic accounts classified by Crisp, starting with the most extreme version. The Strong ontological account is classically proposed by Gess, who suggests that the Logos ceased to be divine when he became a human at the incarnation, and then took his divinity up at the ascension.[18] The problem with this view is that it asserts that a mere human (i.e. the incarnated Logos) who did not possess a divine nature actually became truly divine and enthroned as God at some point in time (i.e. at the ascension). This amounts to the enthronement of a second god, which contradicts the deepest logic of Jewish monotheism[19] that Christ himself evidently held.[20] Furthermore, this view jeopardizes the efficacy of the salvation which the Logos had come to accomplish. As Barth argues, if in Christ God is not wholly God, then 'everything that we may say about the reconciliation of the world made by God in this humiliated One is left hanging in the air.'[21]

The standard ontological account, which claims that the Logos relinquishes certain divine properties, is classically proposed by Thomasius. Thomasius suggests that what the Logos gave up was not what is essential to deity, but a divesting of the divine mode of being, and thereby of his glory (which consists of attributes such as omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence).[22] The divine glory arises

assimilate, and manifest divine power. See Frank Weston, *The One Christ; An Enquiry into the Manner of the Incarnation* (London: Longmans, 1914), esp. pp. 150, 153, 169, 173. Rather similarly, P.T. Forsyth suggests that the Son of God did not renounce but rather retracted the divine attributes from being actual to being potential, setting aside the style of a God and took on the style of a servant. See P.T. Forsyth, *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ* (London: Independent Press, 1961), pp. 307–308).

[16] Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity,* pp. 121–122.

[17] Thompson, 'Nineteenth-Century Kenotic Christology', p. 102.

[18] Wolfgang Friedrich Gess, *Die Lehre von der Person Christi Entwickelt aus dem Selbstbewusstsein Christi und aus dem Zeugnisse der Apostel* (Basel: Bahnmaiers Buchhandlung, 1856), pp. 304–305.

[19] David Yeago, 'The New Testament and the Nicene Dogma' in Stephen Fowl (ed.), *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Malden: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 91–92.

[20] James D.G. Dunn, 'Was Jesus a Monotheist? A Contribution to the Discussion of Christian Monotheism', in Loren Stuckenbruck and Wesley North (ed.), *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism* (London, T & T Clark international, 2004), pp. 104–112.

[21] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* vol. 4 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956–1975), pp. 179–180, 183.

[22] Thompson, 'Nineteenth-Century Kenotic Christology', pp. 48, 70.

only in God's relationship to the world and therefore, since being related to the world is not essential to God, possessing divine glory is inessential to God.[23] A similar proposal has been defended recently by Davis. Davis argues that whole kenotic scheme depends on there not being any essential divine properties which no human being can have and on there not being any essential human properties which no divine being can have, and that looking at the incarnation of Christ is one fruitful (maybe the best) way of discovering which properties of God and human beings are essential and which are accidental.[24] He suggests that properties like omnipotence, omniscience, etc are essential properties not of *being divine* but of *being divine simpliciter* (i.e. being divine without also being human), and asserts that what Christians want to say about Jesus Christ is that he was truly human but not merely human, truly divine but not divine *simpliciter*.[25] Davis also suggests that perhaps omnipotence, omniscience, etc are *common* divine properties, but not *essential* divine properties.[26] Thus, Davis proposes that the Logos emptied himself, during the period of Jesus' earthly life, of those properties that normally characterize divinity but which are inconsistent with humanity.[27]

Functionalist Kenoticism affirms that, in becoming incarnate, the Logos did not abdicate any of his attributes, but merely restricted the exercise of certain of his attributes.[28] Having defined Functional Kenoticism this way, Crisp goes on to cite as example the view (defended by recent advocates of Kenoticism) that perhaps what is essential to God is having the properties of being omniscience-unless-freely-and-temporarily-choosing-not-to-be-otherwise, omnipotent-unless-freely-and-temporarily-choosing-not-to-be-otherwise, etc. Crisp observes that the ingenious thing about this non-standard analysis of divine properties is that the Logos can surrender, for example, the exercise of omnipotence and still possesses all essential divine properties. Unlike the ontological account of Kenoticism, it is not that the Logos abdicates or surrenders certain of his divine properties in the Incarnation. He retains these properties, but does not exercise them for the duration of the Incarnation.[29]

Evans notes that it might be objected that this non-standard analysis of divine properties may have an artificial 'cooked-up' feel to it. It seems *ad hoc*, and not as 'perfect' as omnipotence *simpliciter*,

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[23]   Ibid.
[24]   Stephen Davis, *Christian Philosophical Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 176–177.
[25]   Ibid.
[26]   Ibid, pp. 177, 188.
[27]   Ibid, p. 175.
[28]   Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, pp. 139–140.
[29]   Ibid, pp. 145–146. For another version of Functional Kenoticism which does not use such non-standard analysis of divine attributes, see Section 4.

omniscience *simpliciter*, etc.[30] In response, Evans argues that a coherent account of omnipotence entails the power to limit omnipotence, but if God limits himself this would not be a relinquishing of omnipotence. Evans argues that when (for example) God expressed the intention to bless Abraham's descendents, he is no longer free to disregard Abraham's descendents. Nevertheless, this limitation is not like the case of a later parliament whose power has been limited by an earlier parliament. Rather, God's power is limited by God's own continuing will to will a particular course of action over time.[31]

However, what Evans goes on to say concerning the incarnation shows that he has understood this non-standard analysis of divine properties as ontological rather than functional kenosis.[32] Evans proposes that the self-limitation of the Logos at the incarnation is more radical than (say) God expressing the intention to bless Abraham's descendents. Evans argues that for real kenosis the decision must not be thought of as a continuous decision to restrict the employment of these properties, a decision that can be revoked at any time, as this does not look like a case of 'emptying' but rather simply a case of not using a power that one continues to have.[33] He thinks that a Jesus who is omnipotent at every moment, but chooses not to exercise this power, would surely not fit well with the description of Jesus as 'like us in all respects, apart from sin.' He therefore suggests that 'Perhaps then a choice not to exercise divine power must be understood not merely as a continuous self-limitation but rather as a kind of 'binding' choice. This kind of choice would be a true emptying.'[34]

Hence, Evans goes on to propose that at the incarnation the Logos gave up his omnipotence, and since this was so he could not use omnipotence to get it back. The consequences, therefore, were not grounded merely in the Logos's continuing will, but in 'the hard reality of the situation he has willed to create, once that situation is in place'. Nevertheless, Evans argues that there is a strong analogy between this and the general capacity for God to limit himself: The Logos could foresee the limitations he would be accepting in

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[30] C. Stephen Evans, 'The Self-Emptying of Love: Some Thoughts on Kenotic Christology', in Stephen Davis, Daniel Kendall and Gerald O'Collins (eds.), *The Incarnation: An interdisciplinary symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 260; idem, 'Kenotic Christology and the Nature of God', in C. Stephen Evans (ed.), *Exploring Kenotic Christology: the Self-emptying of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 198.

[31] Evans, 'The Self-Emptying of Love', p. 261; Evans, 'Kenotic Christology', pp. 209–212.

[32] Crisp claims that Evans has given a kenotic account that, at certain points, sounds functionalist while at other times sounds ontological (Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, p. 144n.43).

[33] Evans, 'Kenotic Christology', p. 200.

[34] Evans, 'The Self-Emptying of Love', pp. 255–256.

becoming human and accepted them; he too was bound by his own will, only in this case his omnipotence (and other properties) had been actually given up. Evans argues that an omnipotent divine person would have the power to give up omnipotence, thus leading to the kenotic understanding of the proper divine property as 'being -omnipotent-unless-freely-choosing-to-limit-himself.'[35]

Evans argues that an omnipotent being must similarly be able to limit his knowledge. A decision by God to live as an embodied being would be analogous in some ways to a decision by a human being to undergo a brain operation that would limit his mental functioning in some way. Even a dualist would agree that, in this life, at least, our ability to think depends on an intact and healthy brain, and the ways in which we think are shaped by physical states of the brain. Insofar as what is physical is finite, it would seem reasonable to think that what is dependent on the physical is also finite. A decision by God to become incarnate would thus be a decision to assume these limitations, to 'forget' the eternal truths he previously knew.[36]

In assessment of these Kenotic proposals, the problems with Strong Ontological Kenoticism have already been discussed above, viz. it amounts to the enthronement of second god, and jeopardizes the efficacy of the salvation which the Logos had come to accomplish. The question now is whether the Kenoticism proposed by standard ontological and functional accounts can successfully avoid the implication that the Logos gave up his divinity at the incarnation.

Arguments have been offered for thinking that the Ontological Kenotic reformulation of divine attributes is unsatisfactory: What follows from Standard Ontological Kenoticism is that there is a possible world in which a person P exists and he (like baby Jesus) is no more powerful and no more intelligent than an ordinary human being, and yet P is divine even though P is weaker and less intelligent than many other persons.[37] This strains credulity, as most people from diverse cultures and religious persuasions would think that the possession of knowledge, for example, is a good thing, a perfection. There is no state of knowledge, which, qua knowledge, is bad or merely neutral in value, and it is precisely because knowledge is almost universally regarded as a good thing that many theologians have derived God's omniscience from the doctrine that his nature is absolutely perfect.[38] Hence, on the understanding of God as the greatest possible being for

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[35] Evans, 'Kenotic Christology', p. 213.
[36] Evans, 'The Self-Emptying of Love', pp. 262–263.
[37] See William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), pp. 607–608.
[38] David Blumenfeld, 'On the Compossibility of the Divine Attributes', in Thomas Morris (ed.), *The Concept of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 203.

whom 'all things are possible' (Gen. 18:14, Matt. 19:26, Luke 1:37 etc), many people would (justifiably) think that if a divine person was no longer omniscient and omnipotent, he would no longer be divine.

The Ontological Kenoticist might reply that a divine Person who could and is willing to give up his knowledge and power for mankind's salvation is greater and more worthy of worship than one who could not or would not do this.[39] In reply, though this issue is highly controversial, I personally would agree that, being the greatest possible being who possesses omnipotence, a divine Person *could* indeed give up his omnipotence and omniscience if he so wills,[40] but the question is whether if he were to do so he would still be divine after giving up his omnipotence and omniscience. The Ontological Kenoticist would insist that he would still be, but as noted above many people would share a different intuition. Moreover, the intuition that the greatness of God's being is related to the greatness of his knowledge and power has Scriptural support (e.g. Ps.147:4–5). Additionally, it will be shown in section 4 that sacrificing himself out of love and for the sake of accomplishing salvation for mankind does not necessarily require a divine Person to lose his omniscience and omnipotence through the incarnation. On the Divine Preconscious Model of the incarnation, for example, the incarnate Logos could accomplish salvation for mankind by genuinely experiencing fatigue, suffering, temptations, and death on the Cross without losing his omnipotence and omniscience.[41] Hence a loss of his knowledge and power would have been an unnecessary loss of his greatness.

Concerning the non-standard analysis of divine properties, it has been argued that it seems incoherent to say, for example, that Christ had the essential property of omnipotent-except-when-kenotically-incarnate. For if, having relinquished omnipotence, he retained the power to get omnipotence back again, then he never in fact ceased to be omnipotent, since omnipotence is a modal property concerning what one *can* do. But if he lacked the power to get omnipotence back again, then how is it that he was only temporarily not omnipotent?[42] As noted above, it is for such reason that Evans suggests that 'being-omnipotent-unless-freely-choosing-to-limit-himself' should be understood in the context of the incarnation that the Logos gave up his

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[39] I thank Professors Stephen Williams and C. Stephen Evans for suggesting this objection. See also Thomas Senor, 'Drawing on Many Traditions: An Ecumenical Kenotic Christology', in Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (eds.), *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 104.

[40] For arguments against the Anselmian view, see Andrew Loke, 'Divine Omnipotence and Moral Perfection', *Religious Studies* 46 (2010), pp. 525–538.

[41] See Loke, 'On the Coherence of the Incarnation', pp. 51–63.

[42] Craig and Moreland, *Philosophical Foundations*, pp. 607–608.

omnipotence without having the ability to take it back again. Nevertheless, even if these contrived properties are understood this way, they are still not properties in the sense of capacities or qualities but are really statements masquerading as properties, for they are really assertions like 'Christ remains divine even if he temporarily gives up omniscience'—which is precisely the issue under dispute.[43] This view still faces the problem whether the Logos, in the state of having given up his omnipotence without having the ability to take it back again, is still divine, i.e. does he still share the essence of God who is the greatest possible being, even though he is weaker, less intelligent and smaller than many other beings.

In summary, affirming the aforementioned versions of Standard Ontological Kenoticism and using it as the 'control' for the doctrine of God in the ways that these Kenoticists have proposed is highly problematic and hence undesirable. Nevertheless, this does not imply that all forms of Kenoticism are problematic. There might be a form of Functional Kenotic Christology which is not vulnerable to the foregoing criticisms, and which can answer Evans' concern that a Jesus who is omnipotent at every moment but chooses not to exercise this power would not fit well with the Chalcedonian description of Jesus as 'like us in all respects, apart from sin.' This form of Functional Kenoticism will be discussed in Section 4.

3. Two-Consciousnesses Model[44]

In a landmark study, Thomas Morris revived an 'ancient view' of the incarnation which he called the Two Minds view.[45] According to this view, the incarnate Logos had two distinct minds and consciousnesses:

1. The divine mind of the Logos encompassing the full scope of omniscience, and which was consciously aware of everything.
2. A human mind that came into existence and grew and developed as the boy Jesus grew and developed, and which was not consciously aware of everything.[46]

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[43] Ibid.

[44] The Two Consciousnesses Model has also been called 'the two minds model', 'the split mind model', and the 'inclusion model' in the literature. The reason for choosing 'Two Consciousnesses model' is that the term 'two consciousnesses' brings out what is distinctive about this model in comparison with the model which I will discuss in the next section.

[45] Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986). Morris argues that hints of this view can be found in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzen, and Cyril of Alexandria (p. 102n.20).

[46] Ibid, pp. 102–103.

Morris proposes an asymmetric accessing relation between the two minds: The divine mind contained, but was not contained by, his earthly mind. The divine mind had full and direct access to the human mind, but the human mind did not have such access to the divine mind, but only such access, on occasion, as the divine mind allowed it to have.[47]

1. For this view Morris suggests four kinds of analogies:Two computer programs, one containing but not contained by the other.[48]
2. Dream phenomenon: The dreamer is having a dream with a large cast of characters. The dreamer himself is one of those characters, perceiving the internal environs of the dream and taking part in its action 'from within'. But at the same time, the dreamer 'as sleeper', is somehow aware, in what could be called an overarching level of consciousness, that it is just a dream that is going on, in which he is playing a role as one of the characters.[49]
3. The postulation of 20th century psychology that the subconscious mind stands in an asymmetric accessing relation to the conscious mind.[50]
4. Cases of brain hemisphere commissurotomy, multiple personality, and hypnosis, where it seems that a single individual human being has two or more ranges of consciousness.[51] While some have identified each discrete range of consciousness as a person, Morris thinks that this is implausible, arguing that if one troubling aberrant personality is eliminated therapeutically from the behavioral repertoire of someone afflicted with multiple personalities, the therapist surely need not see the effect of her work as the killing of a person.[52]

Richard Swinburne has proposed a 'Divided Mind model' which also implies that Christ had two consciousnesses. He utilizes Freud's theory of how an agent can have two systems of belief to some extent independent of each other. In performing some actions, the agent is acting on one system of belief and not guided by beliefs of the other system; and conversely. Although all his beliefs are accessible—they would not be his beliefs unless he had privileged access to them—he

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47 Ibid, p. 103.
48 Ibid, p. 103.
49 Ibid, p. 104.
50 Ibid, p. 104.
51 Ibid, p. 104.
52 Ibid, pp. 104–105.

refuses to admit to his consciousness beliefs relevant to his action, on which he is not acting.[53] Swinburne gives the following analogies:

1. A mother may refuse to acknowledge to herself a belief that her son is dead. When asked if she believes that he is dead, she says 'No', and this is an honest reply, for it is guided by those beliefs of which she is conscious.[54]
2. We can sometimes perform at once two quite separate tasks—for example, having a conversation with someone and writing a letter to someone else—in directing which quite distinct beliefs are involved.[55]

Swinburne suggests that a divine individual could, in becoming incarnate and acquiring a human belief-acquisition system, keep the resulting inclinations to beliefs to some extent separate from his divine knowledge system, resulting in a divided mind in which the beliefs of both parts are consciously acknowledged.[56]

Alongside philosophers of religion such as Morris and Swinburne, a significant number of theologians such as Gerald O'Collins, Oliver Crisp, Richard Sturch, and Richard Cross have also done much work on defending versions of the Two Consciousnesses Model.[57] Nevertheless, the main problem with this model has not been adequately addressed, and this concerns Christ's self consciousness. Bayne notes that 'Neither Swinburne nor Morris provides an account of Christ's self consciousness, or 'I' thoughts.'[58] Bayne observes that one would assume that Christ's 'I' thoughts had the same referent irrespective of the consciousnesses in which they were tokened, and surely it would be possible for Christ to think of himself (as himself) in either of his consciousnesses.[59] Thus, the Two Consciousnesses model would entail that the Logos having his human range of consciousness was consciously aware of himself being consciously unaware of the day of his coming (Mark 13:32). At the same time, the Logos having his divine range of consciousness was aware of himself being

[53] Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 201.

[54] Ibid, p. 201.

[55] Ibid, p. 202.

[56] Ibid, pp. 201–203.

[57] See, for example, Oliver Crisp, 'Compositional Christology without Nestorianism', in Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (eds.), *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Gerald O'Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic study of Jesus Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 246–247; Richard Sturch, *The Word and the Christ* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991); Cross, 'Incarnation'.

[58] Tim Bayne, 'The Inclusion Model of the Incarnation: Problems and Prospects', *Religious Studies* 37(2001), p. 136.

[59] Ibid.

consciously aware of the day of his coming. In other words, the Logos would be aware of himself being consciously aware of the day of his coming, and aware of himself being consciously unaware of the day of his coming at the same time. He would have self-consciousness SC1: 'I am aware of myself being consciously aware of the day of my coming,' and simultaneously self-consciousness SC2: 'I am aware of myself being consciously unaware of the day of my coming.' A proponent of the Two-Consciousnesses Model might argue that the Logos could be aware of two different things simultaneously just as a person can be at present aware of a computer in front of him/ her and of the noise of the traffic simultaneously.[60] In response, awareness of a computer and awareness of the noise of the traffic do not entail contradictory SCs and therefore they can co-exist in the same self simultaneously. By contrast, the problem here is that 'myself being consciously aware' occurs in SC1 and 'myself being consciously unaware' occurs in SC2, and that these two self-consciousnesses are contradictory and therefore cannot exist in the same self simultaneously. To say that there are two contradictory *self*-consciousnesses simultaneously is to say there are two *selves*.

Furthermore, on the Two Consciousnesses model, it would seem that the human consciousness and the divine consciousness could encounter and address each other simultaneously, thus they could exist in a simultaneous I-Thou relationship to each other. But the possibility of such I-Thou relationship implies two persons.[61] Hence, what follows from the Two Consciousnesses model is that Jesus would be two persons as affirmed by Nestorianism.

But what about the analogies proposed by Morris and Swinburne, which suggest that one person can have two consciousnesses? Concerning Morris' analogies, computer programs are irrelevant to this question as computers are not persons. As for dream phenomenon, Morris himself notes that it is possible that 'in such experiences the dreamer is very rapidly alternating between two perspectives, in which case it would provide no analogy at all.'[62] Concerning cases of multiple personality, hypnosis and other dissociative syndromes, the interpretation of these is extremely challenging, and while it is

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[60] I thank Richard Sturch for raising this line of thought in private correspondence.

[61] Garrett DeWeese, 'One Person, Two Natures: Two Metaphysical Models of the Incarnation', in Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology* (Nashville, B & H Academic, 2007), pp. 133–134. cf. Richard Cross, who, following Rahner, thinks that it is favourable to allow that the human Jesus and the Logos can engage in dialogue and conversation Richard Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 316). Cross does not offer any reason why this is favourable, and neither does he engaged the vexing problem of I-thou relationship that this would entail. There is, of course, no account of the human consciousness of Jesus addressing the divine Logos in the New Testament.

[62] Morris, *Logic of God Incarnate*, p. 104.

clear that dissociation involves various kinds of representational and access disunities, it is debatable whether it ever involves the simultaneous existence of two separate streams of consciousness in a single subject.[63] As for brain hemisphere commissurotomy, even if (and it is a very big 'if') this results in two *simultaneously conscious* minds, based on the reasons given above (the simultaneous presence of two contradictory *self*-consciousnesses implies two *selves*, the possibility of I-thou relationship implies two persons) there are good grounds for agreeing with scholars who think that each discrete range of consciousness *would be* a person, and thus Morris' attempts to find an analogue for his model of the Incarnation would fail in any case. Morris does not offer any reason why splitting the brain could not produce two persons (if the splitting of an embryo at an early stage of pregnancy can result in two persons (twins), why can't the splitting of the brain result in two persons?), and neither does he offer any good reason for thinking why the elimination of a troubling aberrant personality would not be killing a person. In any case the worry seems unnecessary, for there is no convincing evidence of two *simultaneously conscious* minds after a brain hemisphere commissurotomy: it could very well be the case that consciousness in the split brain switches between hemispheres, and that at any one time the split brain patient has only a single stream of consciousness.[64] Swinburne's analogy that a person can be simultaneously doing different actions guided by different sets of beliefs of which he is consciously aware (e.g. having a conversation with someone and writing a letter to someone else) is not quite analogous to his model, a model which entails Christ having a divided mind in which *contradictory* beliefs of both parts are *simultaneously and consciously* acknowledged such that two different self-consciousnesses result (e.g. SC1 and SC2, see above). Morris' analogy of the subconscious mind standing in an asymmetric accessing relation to the conscious mind and Swinburne's analogy of a mother who refuses to admit a true belief to her conscious mind are not analogous to the Two Consciousnesses view, for on these analogies there is only one stream of consciousness; there is no two distinct streams of consciousnesses which their views assert. Hence, none of the analogies provides any evidence for the Two Consciousnesses view.

Morris' analogy of the subconscious mind and Swinburne's analogy of the mother, however, provide analogies for the model which will be discussed in the next section.

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[63] Tim Bayne, 'Unity of Consciousness', in Tim Bayne, Axel Cleeremans and Patrick Wilken (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[64] Ibid.

4. Divine Subconscious Model

The view that divine omniscience and other divine properties was within the subconscious of the Logos in his incarnate state has been suggested in a number of writings. In comparison with the Ontological Kenotic and Two Consciousnesses Models, however, this model has sadly been neglected in a number of authoritative surveys of the field.[65] Traces of this 'Divine Subconscious' solution can be found before the era of modern psychology and its concept of the subconscious. For example, they can be found in the writings of Duns Scotus and some Lutheran dogmaticians.[66] Modern proponents include theologians and philosophers such as William Sanday, W.R. Matthews, Millard Erickson, William Lane Craig, Tim Bayne, Keith Yandell, Garrett DeWeese, and Andrew Cullison.[67]

The most recent versions by Joseph Jedwab and myself refine the earlier versions and avoid certain problems.[68] In particular, the version, which I called the Divine Preconscious Model, aims to be comprehensive in scope as its addresses other problems with the coherence of the incarnation, such as issues concerning Jesus apparently limited power and presence as well. Due to limitation of space, only a brief summary of this model can be given here (details of it can be found elsewhere).[69] According to this model, at the incarnation the mind of the Logos came to include a consciousness and a preconscious, and certain divine properties such as the knowledge of all truths resided in the preconscious (the preconscious is understood as mental contents in the subconscious that are not currently in

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[65] For example, it was not mentioned in Oliver Crisp's entry in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* and Richard Cross's entry in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*.

[66] See the Christological models discussed in Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1951), p. 165; and the discussion of Dun Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense (Ordinatio)*, I.3, dist.14, q.2, n.20 in Sturch, *The Word and the Christ*, p. 27.

[67] William Sanday, Christologies Ancient and Modern (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910); W.R. Matthews, The Problem of Christ in the Twentieth Century: An Essay on the Incarnation (London: Oxford University Press, 1950); Millard Erickson, The Word Became Flesh (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1991); Craig and Moreland, Philosophical Foundations, ch. 29; Tim Bayne, 'The Inclusion Model', pp. 138–139; Keith Yandell, 'A Gross and Palpable Contradiction?: Incarnation and Consistency', Sophia 33(1994), pp. 30–45; DeWeese, 'One Person, Two Natures'; Andrew Cullison, 'Omniscience as a Dispositional State' Philosophia Christi 8 (2006), pp. 151–160.

[68] See Joseph Jedwab, 'The Incarnation and Unity of Consciousness', in Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (eds.), *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Loke, 'On the Coherence of the Incarnation'.

[69] For further details, see Loke, 'On the Coherence of the Incarnation,' pp. 50–63; Andrew Loke, 'Solving a paradox against concrete-composite Christology: a modified hylomorphic proposal,' *Religious Studies* (forthcoming 2011, published online at http://journals.cambridge.org/repo_A79PrfiX).

consciousness but are accessible to consciousness by directing atten-
tion to them). At the same time, a human preconscious and a human
body were created. In addition, the consciousness acquired human
properties that were also newly created. This acquisition included a
certain extent of the consciousness' capacity to function being made
dependent on the brain, resulting in the capacity to experience physi-
cal pain, to have sensations through physical organs, and to have the
desires for food, for sleep, etc.

The Divine Preconscious Model would insists that, for any person
P to possess knowledge of *y,* it is not required that his/her knowledge
of *y* be consciously held, i.e. it is not required that his/her knowledge
of y be occurrent rather than dispositional. It can then be argued
that the knowledge of all things by a divine Person does not require
his constant conscious awareness of all things, and thus it could be
the case that a divine Person (say, the Logos) chooses to let part of
this knowledge reside in his preconscious. Philosopher Robert Audi
explains the distinction between occurrent and dispositional beliefs
as follows

'What is dispositionally as opposed to occurrently believed is anal-
ogous to what is in a computer's memory but not on its screen: the
former needs only be brought to the screen by scrolling a simple
retrieval process in order to be used, whereas the latter is before
one's eyes. Compare a dispositionally believed proposition's needing
to be "called in", as in answering a request to be reminded of what
one said last week, with an occurrently believed proposition's being
focally in mind, roughly in the sense that one attends to it, as where
one has just formulated it to offer as one's thesis.'[70]

The Divine Preconscious Model can be regarded as a modifica-
tion of the Two Consciousnesses Model, for instead of postulating
that the Logos possessed omniscience in a divine consciousness dis-
tinct from his human consciousness, it postulates that the Logos
possessed omniscience in his preconscious. It can also regarded as a
form of Functional Kenoticism, for it postulates that the Logos con-
tinued to possess divine properties (e.g. omniscience, omnipotence)
in his preconscious after incarnation, but out of love for human-
ity he chose not to use these divine powers in certain acts that he
performed.

With respect to the apparent ignorance of the day of the coming
of the Son of Man (Mark 13:32), it should be noted that the Greek
word *oiden* which is translated as 'know' in this passage and also
in the parallel passage in Matt. 24:36 means 'to have realized, per-
ceived, to know'; it is often used in the New Testament in a general
way, e.g. to know a person, to be able to understand/ apprehend/

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[70] Robert Audi, 'Dispositional beliefs and dispositions to believe', *Nous* 28 (1994),
p. 420.

recognize.[71] Therefore, in view of its semantic range, in these passages *oiden* can be legitimately rendered as 'aware'. Thus, Mark 13:32 can be read as 'But of that day or hour no one is aware, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.' This reading fits the context perfectly: the disciples would be hoping that the Son would reveal to them the day, but no one can reveal what he/ she is not aware. This reading would also fit with the Divine Preconscious Model's postulation that, in his incarnate state, the Logos restrained himself from using the omniscience, i.e. he prevented himself from bringing his knowledge of all things which resided in his subconscious (including the knowledge of the day of the coming of the Son of Man) into conscious awareness, so as to share in our conscious experiences of having limited awareness of truths and also to grow in wisdom (Luke 2:40, 52).

It might be asked, 'Did the Son know something of which he was not aware (not even when asked about it)? If being asked did not bring the item to awareness, how could it be that he knew it?' In reply, the Son knew the item in the sense that he could bring the item into awareness when he was being asked. However, he chose not to do so. Now it is the case that ordinary human beings often cannot control the process whereby dispositional knowledge becomes occurrent knowledge; for example, if we were to be asked 'who the first president of the United States was', very often the proposition 'George Washington was the first president of the United States' 'automatically' becomes occurrent knowledge; that process is often beyond our control. In Jesus' case, he could have exercised his omnipotence (in respect of his divine nature) to prevent dispositional knowledge from 'automatically' becoming occurrent.[72] Such prevention would not result in Jesus ceasing to be truly human, for even though the general inability to control the process whereby dispositional knowledge becomes occurrent knowledge is common to human nature, there is no adequate reason to think that this inability is essential to the human nature. On the contrary, it seems theoretically possible that psychological techniques could be developed in the future such that this inability could be overcome by someone learning these techniques, but surely he/ she would not thereby be regarded as not truly human then. This theoretical possibility is thus a good reason for thinking that this inability is not essential to human nature. Exercising his omnipotence (in respect of his divine nature) to prevent his dispositional knowledge from 'automatically' becoming occurrent does not imply that Jesus could not access this dispositional knowledge if he chose to. On the contrary, if Jesus chose to

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[71] See Gerhard Kittel et al., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 116–119.

[72] Cullison, 'Omniscience as a Dispositional State', pp. 157–158.

find out about all that he believed, he would become aware of all true beliefs by accessing the whole of his divine preconscious. But he freely chose not to find out, in accordance with the divine plan to experience our limitations.

With respect to Evans' worry concerning Functional Kenoticism mentioned in Section 2, viz. 'a Jesus who is omnipotent at every moment, but chooses not to exercise this power, would surely not fit well with the description of Jesus as 'like us in all respects, apart from sin', it should first be noted that Heb. 4:15, from which this phrase is taken, does not necessarily have the implication which Evans thought that it has. The following phrase of Heb.4:15, 'yet without sin', indicates that the author of Hebrews does not intend to affirm that Jesus had all the common kinds of properties and experiences which humans have. Rather, by asserting that Christ was 'without sin', the author qualifies the previous phrase by excluding some kinds of properties and experiences *in addition to being 'without sin'*, such as temptations that arise out of sin previously committed.[73] Additionally, the 'like us in all respects' that the author had in mind may well be trials that were common to Jesus and the readers of Hebrews such as denunciation, arrest, and abuse (Matt. 26:59–68, 27:26–31 *par*.; cf. Heb. 10:32–34, 13:13).[74] Concerning sympathizing with believers, which is the main point of this verse, sympathy with the believer in his trial does not depend on having absolute commonality of experiences such as the experience of sin, but on the experience of the strength of suffering and temptation to sin which only the sinless can know in its full intensity.[75]

Evans might argue that other Scriptural passages (Heb. 2:14–17, 5:2; Rom. 8:3) imply that the properties and experiences of Jesus were those that were *common* to humans. In reply, these passages are not necessarily affirming that Jesus was made, tempted, and suffered in exactly the same way as each human, which (the authors of these passages would have easily realized) is clearly impossible (e.g. Jesus being a man could not have experienced all that a woman experienced e.g. the experience [and trial] of pregnancy cf. Gen. 3:16). Rather, what these passages affirm of Jesus in their contexts is that he was made like humans *in the religiously significant sense that* he was able to experience certain (not necessarily all kinds of) human desires, limitations and sufferings, be tempted, and experience death for the sins of others, and the possession of a divine preconscious does not make these areas of commonality impossible.[76]

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[73] On this point, see F.F. Bruce, *Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 116.

[74] Craig Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), p. 283.

[75] Adapted from Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 116.

[76] See Loke, 'On the Coherence of the Incarnation', pp. 57–63.

To address the worry that a person who is omnipotent at every moment could not be regarded as truly human, it can be postulated that the divine preconscious (where his omnipotence resided) was not a part of his human nature, but was a part of his divine nature, and that the divine nature and human nature were concrete and distinct parts of Christ.[77] Thus, the incarnate Logos had a complete human nature (and was truly human) in virtue of the aspect of the conscious which had human properties, the human preconscious, and human body, and a complete divine nature (and was truly divine) in virtue of the aspect of the conscious having access to the divine preconscious. On this scenario, the Logos would have two sets of power by becoming incarnate: the first set of power which was his divine power (residing in his preconscious), and the second set of power which was the power inherent in the nerves and muscles of the human body, the energy of which could run out. If he refrained from using the first set of power and instead utilized the second set to carry out certain heavy work, he would experience fatigue. Therefore, Jesus had access to his omnipotence, but that access was in respect of his divine nature, not his human nature. The concrete divine and human natures were distinct from each other, hence there was no confusion of natures, and no attribution of omnipotence to his humanity. It can be further argued that, while the possession of a divine preconscious is clearly not a common property of humans, it is not contrary to a person having the essential property of being human, and that having a divine preconscious would only cause a person to be not *merely* human, but that does not entail that he would not be truly human (Christians have traditionally claim that Jesus was not merely human, even though he was truly human).[78]

By refraining from using his divine powers, Jesus would have truly shared much of our common experiences, such as the experiences of fatigue and the lack of conscious awareness and certainty of some future events. To use the analogy of Erickson,[79] it is like the world's fastest sprinter being entered in a three legged race, where he must run with one of his legs tied to a partner. Just as the sprinter could unloose the tie at any time but chooses to restrict himself, so Jesus could have chosen to access his divine preconscious anytime, but he chose to restrict himself. And just as the sprinter was not pretending

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[77] I defend a concrete composite Christology with the Divine Preconscious Model in 'Solving a paradox against concrete-composite Christology.'

[78] The distinctions between common and essential properties, and truly but not merely human, are taken from Thomas Morris, 'The Metaphysics of God Incarnate', in Ronald Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga (eds.), *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological essays* (Notre Dame, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), pp. 115–117.

[79] Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), p. 752.

when he struggled to run with his leg tied, Jesus was not pretending when he experienced our limitations. In this self-limited state, he would have to rely on the Father and the Holy Spirit throughout his life as the Gospels portray, and his reliance enables us to see in him the perfection of our human nature, towards which we should strive as his disciples.

5. Conclusion

With respect to the problem concerning Jesus' apparently limitation in knowledge, the Divine Subconscious Model proposes that he restrained himself from accessing the omniscience which resided in his subconscious, so as to share in our conscious limitations. By postulating that omniscience was within the subconscious of the Logos, the Divine Subconscious Model affirms that, even while he truly experienced our limitations, the Logos remained omniscient, and hence the problem with Ontological Kenoticism is avoided. By postulating that the Logos had only one conscious, the Divine Subconscious Model avoids the problem with the Two Consciousnesses model. Therefore, the Divine Subconscious Model retains the strengths of the Kenotic Model in maintaining the unity of consciousness, and it retains the strengths of the Two Consciousnesses Model in maintaining that the Logos possessed omniscience, while avoiding the weaknesses with these models discussed earlier. Further questions could of course be asked about this model, and it is beyond the scope of this paper to address all the issues concerning the coherence of incarnation. Nevertheless, the Divine Subconscious Model does seem to be the most promising solution to the problem concerning Jesus' knowledge, and further work on this model is likely to bear much fruit.[80,81]

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[80] See, for example, Loke, 'Solving a paradox against concrete-composite Christology', where I show that the Divine Preconscious Model can help to resolve certain difficulties with concrete-composite Christology.

[81] I would like to thank Professor Alister McGrath for his helpful comments.