“THY WILL BE DONE”:
A DOGMATIC DEFENSE OF DYOTHELITISM IN LIGHT OF RECENT MONOTHELITE PROPOSALS

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

---

by

Robert Lucas Stamps

May 2014

APPROVAL SHEET

"THY WILL BE DONE":

A DOGMATIC DEFENSE OF DYOTHELITISM IN LIGHT OF

RECENT MONOTHELITE PROPOSALS

Robert Lucas Stamps

Read and Approved by:

_____

Stephen J. Wellum (Chair)

_____

Michael A. G. Haykin

_____

Paul Helm

Date_____

To Josie, my “nearest neighbor.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Chapter Page

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ICC	International Critical Commentary
IJST	*International Journal of Systematic Theology*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*

PREFACE

This dissertation could not have been completed without the help and encouragement of many dear friends and family members. First, I would like to thank my esteemed committee, Michael Haykin, Paul Helm, and especially my supervisor, Stephen Wellum. These men are recognized experts in their fields, and I consider it a high honor to have received their input on my first efforts as a scholar. I am also grateful to Oliver Crisp for serving as my external reader. His Christological fingerprints will be detectable in this dissertation by anyone familiar with his work. Any weaknesses in the final product are mine alone and cannot be attributed to any of these scholars.

Second, I would like to thank the many friends, fellow students, and colleagues who have borne with me as this thesis was conceived, developed, and has finally been brought full term. I am especially grateful to Matthew Barrett, Oren Martin, Kevin Webb, David Burnette, Lee Tankersley, Toby Jennings, Matt Emerson, and John Gill, who have heard me sort through this topic on countless occasions and have offered many helpful suggestions along the way. I am also thankful to my dear friend, professor, and former church elder, Dr. Bruce Ware, for helping me to see the biblical and theological rationale for his own monothelite position. Though I differ with his conclusions on this particular issue, I am always challenged by his commitment—not just in theory but in practice—to the formal principle of the Reformation: *Sola Scriptura*.

Third, I am deeply grateful for the churches and pastors who have served my family and me during my doctoral work. Tom Schreiner and the other pastors and members of Clifton Baptist Church played a formative role in our young family's life while we were in Louisville. Jeff Mooney and the members of First Baptist Church of Norco, California, have welcomed us with open arms to our new Southern California

home. I am also deeply indebted to three other churches that have played pivotal roles in my spiritual journey. I am grateful to Harmony Grove Baptist Church (especially two of its former members, my parents, Robert and Lisa Stamps) in Winfield, Alabama, where I first learned the gospel of God; to Lakeview Baptist Church in Auburn, Alabama, where I was called and ordained to the gospel ministry; and to New Hope Missionary Baptist Church in Caneyville, Kentucky, where I first served as a pastor. I have learned from both Scripture and experience the truth of Cyprian's axiom: *Habere iam non potest Deum patrem qui ecclesiam non habet matrem*.

Fourth, I am also thankful to California Baptist University for allowing me the time to complete this dissertation. I am especially grateful to Drs. David Poole, Dirk Davis, and Matt Emerson for offering a new faculty member this flexibility.

Finally, and most importantly, I want to thank my dear and faithful wife, Josie, and our three children, Jack, Claire, and Henry, for putting up with my often slow progress on this project. It is hard work to be a Ph.D. student, but it is perhaps harder still to be the spouse of a Ph.D. student. As my "nearest neighbor," to use Martin Luther's affectionate term, Josie has truly loved me as herself and has served me in innumerable ways during the completion of this dissertation. She has followed her Lord's example in gladly surrendering her own will to the divine will through the many peaks and valleys of our life together. This work is lovingly dedicated to her.

R. Lucas Stamps

Riverside, California

May 2014

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:10 AV).[1] As the third petition of the Lord's Prayer, this supplication has become part of the warp and woof of Christian spirituality. It is recited every Lord's Day in churches around the world. It is prayed in the quietness of personal devotions. It is shouted or whispered or left unspoken in "groanings too deep for words" (Rom 8:26) when painful trials afflict the faithful. It serves as a reminder to every Christian believer that "many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand" (Prov 19:21). In many ways, the ability to pray, "Thy will be done," is a mark of Christian discipleship and spiritual maturity. Thus, it is no accident that on the night that Jesus was betrayed, we find the disciples' Rabbi alone in the Garden of Gethsemane, praying the prayer he taught them to pray: "O my Father, if this cup cannot pass away from me, except I drink it, *thy will be done*" (Matt 26:42). Jesus' Gethsemane experience has long fascinated and confounded Christian interpreters.[2] Much could be said about this dramatic scene in the garden (Matthew 26:36-46 par.). Some interpreters are fascinated by the physiological effects of Jesus' struggle (he sweats drops of blood!). Others focus attention on Jesus' psychological struggle in the garden: was he fearful of death itself or of the prospect of bearing the sins of the world or perhaps a combination of the two? Indeed, this passage has often perplexed Christian interpreters precisely because of its raw honesty about

---

[1]Unless noted, as in this case, all Scripture citations are taken from the English Standard Version.

[2]For the history of interpretation, see Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, ed. Helmut Kloester, trans. James E. Crouch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 139-51.

Jesus' struggle in the face of death.

But the Gethsemane Narrative has also functioned in another way in the history of interpretation. The Lord's prayer in Gethsemane has been taken by many Christian interpreters to provide definitive proof that the incarnate Christ possesses two wills: the one divine will, which he shares eternally with the Father and Spirit, and a discrete human will, which he assumed in the incarnation. What is being communicated in the Gethsemane Narrative, on this interpretation, is the perfect conformity of Jesus' human will to the divine will of the Father. As both representative and example, Jesus lives out obedience through a human will on behalf of those who possess morally corrupt human wills. He does so without surrendering his divine will, that is, his volitional capacity to will and act as the Second Person of the Godhead.

This dyothelite (two-wills) interpretation of the Gethsemane Narrative has been the traditional—indeed, conciliar—position of the Christian church across denominational lines down through the centuries. In the seventh century, the Third Council of Constantinople (AD 680-81) denounced monothelitism, the belief that the incarnate Christ has only one will, and decided in favor of dyothelitism, which maintained that the incarnate Christ has two wills—one divine and one human. In the centuries that followed, the dyothelite position would become accepted orthodoxy in all three branches of Christendom: Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism.[3] Indeed, Constantinople III is recognized as the church's Sixth Ecumenical Council. In light of this broad historical consensus, it is not insignificant that several Christian theologians and philosophers have recently criticized dyothelitism and have sought to rehabilitate the monothelite position.[4] For various reasons, these scholars

---

[3]To cite just one prominent example from each of the three branches of Christendom, the two-wills view was defended by John of Damascus, Thomas Aquinas, and John Calvin. Chapters 3 and 4 will examine historic dyothelitism in much more detail.

[4]For example, see Alvin Plantinga, "On Heresy, Mind, and Truth," *Faith and Philosophy* 16,

believe that the one-will view better accounts for the unity of Christ's person and the coherency of his Incarnation. In light of these challenges to the traditional view, it seems that dyothelitism is due for a fresh defense on biblical, historical, and theological grounds. This dissertation seeks to provide a dogmatic (that is, systematic-theological) defense of dyothelitism in light of these recent monothelite proposals. This introductory chapter will summarize the historical development and theological significance of the monothelite debate, propose a thesis in defense of dyothelitism, and outline the method and main contours of the ensuing argument.

Background: The Monothelite Controversy in Historical and Contemporary Perspective

This section will briefly survey the predominance of dyothelitism in the Christian tradition and the reemergence of monothelitism in the modern era.

The Dyothelite Consensus

The monothelite (one-will) controversy arose in the seventh century as Christian theologians continued to wrestle with the implications of the Council of Chalcedon (451), the church's Fourth Ecumenical Council and the touchstone for subsequent Christian orthodoxy. Chalcedon had declared that the Son of God possesses in one person two distinct natures "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation."[5] But the question of how the two natures are related to one another

---

no. 2 (April 1999): 183-84; J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 611-12; Garrett J. DeWeese, "One Person, Two Natures: Two Metaphysical Models of the Incarnation," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 114-53; Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990-1996), 2:317.

[5]"The Definition of Chalcedon (451)," in *Creeds of the Churches*, ed. John Leith (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1982), 35-36.

in this hypostatic (that is, personal) union remained a somewhat open-ended question.[6] To make a long and well-documented story short, some theologians tended to emphasize the unity of Christ's person, while others stressed the distinctness of his two natures.[7] Out of the former camp arose a movement known as monothelitism. The monothelite controversy actually evolved from an earlier debate over the number of "energies" or "actions" (*energeia*) in Christ. Some, in Cyrillian fashion, stressed the unity of Christ's person and argued that Christ had only one energy, which was the center of all of his actions. Others, in a more Chalcedonian fashion, emphasized the distinction between the two natures and argued that Christ had two energies and that "the Logos does by means of each nature the acts that are appropriate to it."[8] The debate remained unresolved until, in 638, the emperor Heraclius forbade both sides from articulating their respective viewpoints. In his decree, however, the emperor sparked the subsequent monothelite controversy when he claimed, "We, following the holy fathers in all things and also in this, confess one will of our Lord Jesus Christ, true God."[9] Pope Honorius I followed Heraclius in arguing for one will in the incarnate Christ. Thus, the monenergistic controversy gave way to the monothelite controversy.

---

[6]On the limits of the Chalcedonian Definition, see Sarah Coakley, "What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not? Some Reflections in the Status and Meaning of the Chalcedonian 'Definition,'" in *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, S.J., and Gerald O'Collins, S.J. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 143-63.

[7]Traditionally, these two emphases have been delineated into two camps, denominated by their respective geographical hubs: Alexandrian Christology (emphasizing divinity and unity) and Antiochene Christology (emphasizing humanity and distinctness). In his excellent study of early Christology, Aloys Grillmeier suggests that this typology proves less than accurate, when one actually examines the historical evidence. Grillmeier suggests instead that we should speak of two emphases that cut across geographical lines: Word-Flesh Christologies and Word-Man Christologies, with the latter emphasizing more consistently the Word's assumption of a rational human soul. Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox, 1964).

[8]Millard J. Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 73.

[9]Heraclius, *Ecthesis*, cited in Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh*, 73.

The monothelite debate was, in many ways, encapsulated by the dispute between Maximus Confessor, the chief opponent of the monothelites, and Pyrrhus, a prominent monothelite theologian. For Pyrrhus, wills belong to persons. Therefore, by Chalcedonian logic, Christ can have only one will corresponding to his singular personhood. Maximus, on the other hand, argued that wills belong to natures. So, again by Chalcedonian reasoning, Christ must have two wills—one divine and one human—corresponding to his two natures. For Maximus, this two-wills position was demanded by Christ's work as the mediator between God and men. He explained that the dyothelite view preserves Christ's ability—as both God and man—to accomplish the work of redemption: "This is why, considering both of the natures from which . . . in which, and of which his person was, [Christ] is acknowledged as able both to will and to effect our salvation."[10] Only as God can Christ will to save, but only as man can he will to obey in the place of fallen human beings. After much theological debate (and much political intrigue), the dyothelite position finally won the day, and monothelitism was denounced by the Third Council of Constantinople (680-81).[11]

As noted above, dyothelitism was subsequently received as the orthodox position by all three branches of Christendom. Considering the fact that the monothelite battles had been waged primarily on the Eastern ecclesiastical front, it is little wonder that the Eastern theologians followed in the steps of Maximus's dyothelitism. John of Damascus, the most prominent medieval Byzantine theologian and the inheritor of Maximus's theology, echoed the Confessor's dyothelite reasoning:

---

[10]Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (New York: St.Vladimir's Press, 2003), 176, cited in Thomas A. Watts, "Two Wills in Christ? Contemporary Objections Considered in Light of a Critical Examination of Maximus the Confessor's *Disputation with Pyrrhus*," *WTJ* 71 (2009): 465.

[11]On the history of the monothelite controversy, see Cyril Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom: Christological Controversies in the Seventh Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2008). See also Paul Verghese, "The Monothelite Controversy: A Historical Survey," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 13 (1968): 196-208.

> We . . . declare that corresponding to His two natures He has the twofold set of properties belonging to the two natures—two natural wills, the divine and the human . . . For since He is consubstantial with God the Father, He freely wills and acts as God. And, since He is also consubstantial with us, the same one freely wills and acts as man. Thus, the miracles are His, and so are the sufferings.[12]

Like Maximus, John argues that Chalcedon's two-natures doctrine demands a corresponding two-wills doctrine. Because wills belong to natures, the two-natured Christ must have two wills. Also like Maximus, John maintains that the one person of Christ wills and acts in two different operations, corresponding his two distinct natures. So, one person wills as both God (the miracles) and man (the sufferings).

Western Christianity, no less than the church in the East, embraced this same dyothelite heritage. Thomas Aquinas, for example, defended the dyothelite position along many of the same lines as Maximus and the Damascene: "The power of the will is natural, and necessarily follows upon the nature . . . Hence besides the Divine will it is necessary to place in Christ a human will."[13] Thomas' logic is identical to Maximus's: wills belong to natures, not persons; therefore, the two-natured Christ must have two wills. Because the medieval theologians accepted Constantinople III as an authoritative council of the universal church, dyothelitism was never seriously questioned.

While the Protestant Reformers reworked the soteriology and ecclesiology of the late medieval church, they left most of the church's Trinitarian and Christological affirmations relatively untouched.[14] To state it differently, the Reformation did not attempt an overthrow of the church's creedal foundations. Their reforms centered on

---

[12]John of Damascus, *Writings*, trans. Frederic H. Chase, Jr., Fathers of the Church, ed. Roy Joseph Deferrari (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1958), 297. See also the discussion in Andrew Louth, *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 166-72.

[13]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), 3.18.1.

[14]One notable exception to this rule is Luther's abandonment of the traditional (so-called) *extra Calvinisticum* and his consequent redefinition of the *communicatio idtiomatum*. For a discussion of the debate between the Lutherans and the Reformed on the extra Calvinisticum, see E. David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-Called* Extra Calvinisticum *in Calvin's Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 1966).

Scripture, justification, and the nature of the true church, not on the Trinity or the person of Christ. The Reformers' Christological conservatism is evident in their uncontroversial adoption of the ecumenical dyothelite consensus. So, for instance, John Calvin, commenting on Jesus' words in Gethsemane—"Not my will, but thine be done" (Luke 22:42 AV)—writes,

> This passage shows plainly enough the gross folly of those ancient heretics, who were called *Monothelites*, because they imagined that the will of Christ was but one and simple; for Christ, as he was God, *willed* nothing different from the Father; and therefore, it follows, that his human soul had affections distinct from the secret purpose of God.[15]

The Gethsemane narrative shows, according to Calvin, that Christ assumed a will distinct from the one he shares eternally with the Father, namely, a human will as a part of his human soul. The Reformed tradition that came in Calvin's wake also affirmed this orthodox two-wills doctrine.[16]

The Reemergence of Monothelitism

The modern era witnessed the first significant defections from this dyothelite consensus from within Christian theology.[17] Two movements are especially associated with the resurgence of monothelite approaches to Christology: Protestant Liberalism and kenotic Christology. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), the father of Liberal theology, made significant revisions to Christology, not only with regard to the will issue, but also with regard to the Chalcedonian tradition more generally. For Schleiermacher, Christ could be said to be divine only in the sense that he uniquely experienced the

---

[15] John Calvin, *A Commentary on A Harmony of the Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, trans. William Pringle, *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 3:233.

[16]For a sampling of Reformed opinion in favor of dyothelitism, see John Owen, *Christologia*, vol. 1 in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1850-53), 15; John Gill, *Gill's Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980); Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theoology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 2:404-5; William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 3rd ed., ed. Alan W. Gomes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 656-57.

[17]This excludes heretical movements that rejected the church's Nicene and Chalcedonian consensus, such as the Socinians.

"feeling of absolute dependence" upon God; he experienced a unity with God in his religious consciousness unparalleled in human history. For Schleiermacher, the two-natures doctrine founders because (1) we cannot speak about "nature" in a uniform way with reference to God and man, and (2) "nature" is not even predicable of an infinite being such as God.[18] So, having abandoned the Chalcedonian framework, it is little wonder that Schleiermacher also rejected the post-Chalcedonian doctrinal distinctions of Constantinople III. Indeed, Schleiermacher and the Liberal tradition after him found the dyothelite doctrine especially objectionable because it threatened to diminish the unity of Christ's person. According to Schleiermacher, "If Christ has two wills, then the unity of the person is no more than apparent."[19] Even if one posited two wills in Christ, Schleiermacher could not see how the two could be operative simultaneously: "One or the other will is always simply a superfluous accompaniment of the other."[20]

If Liberalism represented a defection from dyothelitism from outside of the Chalcedonian tradition, kenotic Christology represented a rejection of the two-wills approach that in many cases sought to work within the Chalcedonian framework.[21] Kenoticism finds its roots in eighteenth century German Lutheranism.[22] Taking their

---

[18]For Schleiermacher's discussion of the person of Christ, see Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. Hugh R. Mackintosh (London: T. & T. Clark, 1999), 377-424.

[19]Ibid., 394.

[20]Ibid. Interestingly, Pyrrhus expressed the same concerns in his debate with Maximus.

[21]However, some radical forms of kenoticism, especially associated with Gess, required significant adaptations not only to classic Christology but also to classic conceptions of the divine nature.

[22]As noted above, Lutheran Christology had already made some noteworthy revisions to classic Christology through its innovations with regard to the *communicatio idiomatum*. According to the classic conception of the communication of properties, the attributes which belong to each of Christ's natures are communicated to his person, so that both sets of attributes—human and divine—can be predicated of the same person. According to Luther and his followers, the *communicatio idiomatum* involved not only predication but also actual transference of properties from the divine to the human nature of Christ. If classic Christology involves both a unity principle (one person) and a distinction principle (two natures), this Lutheran radicalization of the unity principle in Christology eventually led to the kenotic approach. The kenoticists essentially reversed the direction of transference in the Lutheran *communicatio*, that is, they maintained that in order for the Son to become a human he must divest himself of certain

name from the Greek word *kenōo* used Philippians 2:7 ("he emptied himself" or "he made himself nothing"), kenoticists argued that Christ had to give up certain (non-essential) attributes in order to become a man. Several proponents of kenotic Christology explicitly rejected the two-wills doctrine because they feared that it threatened the unity of Christ's person and risked Nestorianism. So, for example, P. T. Forsyth (1848-1921) asserts that "there could not be two wills, or two consciousnesses, in the same personality, by any psychological possibility now credible. We could not have in the same person both knowledge and ignorance of the same thing."[23] Similarly, H. R. Mackintosh (1870-91) argues that "we cannot predicate of Him two consciousnesses or two wills; the New Testament indicates nothing of the kind, nor indeed is it congruous with an intelligible psychology."[24] Because of its explicit rejection of the dyothelite tradition, kenoticism represents one of the three major categories of contemporary monothelitism that will be discussed in this dissertation.

Contemporary Monothelitism

In recent years, Christian theologians and philosophers from several different sectors have called into question the traditional dyothelite position and have sought to revive monothelite Christology. Chapter 2 will explore these recent monothelite proposals in more detail, pointing out the challenges they pose to the traditional view as well as the challenges they face historically, biblically, and theologically. For the present, it will suffice to describe briefly three overlapping categories of contemporary monothelitism. First, several Christian philosophers in the analytic tradition have called

---

divine properties; he must become humanized, in a sense.

[23]Peter T. Forsyth, *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ* (Boston: Pilgrim, 1909), 319.

[24]Hugh R. Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1912), 470.

into question the church's dyothelite consensus.[25] Adopting an "abstract human nature" understanding of the incarnation, these scholars argue that Christ did not assume a concrete human nature—complete with a concrete human soul, mind, and will. Instead, in his incarnation, the Son simply assumed the abstract property of being human. He did not *assume* a human soul, so much as he *became* a human soul by assuming the property of being human. If such is the case, then it makes little sense to argue for a discrete, concrete human will in the incarnate Christ. Even if the Son's will now possesses the capacity to will and act as a human being, his will is nonetheless singular.[26]

A second category of contemporary monothelitism is expressed in kenoticism. Recent decades have seen revival of interest in the older kenotic approach to the incarnation.[27] As mentioned above, kenotic Christology posits a real, metaphysical "empyting" of the Son in order to become incarnate. In his assumption of humanity, the Son willingly surrendered some or all of his incommunicable attributes, choosing instead to live within the constraints of ordinary humanity. If such is the case, then the Son obviously cannot continue to possess and function through a distinct divine will in addition to his contracted human will. Therefore, in its attempt to safeguard the unity of Christ's person on this front, kenoticism tends to reject dyothelitism, as some of its ablest proponents have made explicit.

The third category of monothelitism addressed in this dissertation is closely related to the previous two. A position that can be described as Evangelical Spirit Christology maintains that while Christ did not give up any attributes in the incarnation,

---

[25]For a discussion of analytic philosophy, consult Hans-Johann Glock, *What Is Analytic Philosophy?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For a helpful treatment of the emerging discipline known as "analytic theology," see Oliver D. Crisp and Michael C. Rea, eds., *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[26]For an example of this category, see Plantinga, "On Heresy, Mind and Truth."

[27]For a recent, multi-disciplinary defense of kenoticism, see C. Stephen Evans, ed., *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying God* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2006).

he did give up the exercise of certain attributes in order to live a genuinely human life.[28] Instead of operating out of his own intrinsic divine power, the Son chooses to carry out his ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. For some proponents of Spirit Christology, this position entails a denial of dyothelitism, with its apparent positing of a "dual existence" in Christ. According to Spirit Christology proponent Gerald Hawthorne, the two-wills view tends to "hypostasize" the two natures of Christ and, therefore, comes dangerously close to the Nestorian heresy. In place of dyothelitism, Hawthorne suggests, following kenoticist Vincent Taylor, that the divine will of the Son functions in place of a human will.[29] For Hawthorne, the two-wills view does not take seriously enough the genuine self-emptying of the Son in his Spirit-empowered life and ministry.

The Significance of the Monothelite Debate

What, then, is the significance of this long history of debate over the number of wills in the incarnate Christ and especially the contemporary reemergence of monothelitism, even within the ranks of evangelicalism? Some theologians have maintained that the monothelite controversy was an unnecessary and ultimately unhelpful debate. John Macquarrie summaries this perspective:

> One has got to ask whether the tendency to concentrate on doctrinal formulas has not diminished the existential and soteriological understanding of faith in Jesus Christ, and indeed whether the whole discussion has not been in danger of slipping into artificial disputation over minutiae and fine distinctions.[30]

For Macquarrie, the doctrinal wrangling of the early Christological controversies took the

---

[28]At the fountainhead of this approach stands Gerald Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus* (Dallas: Word, 1991). Another, more philosophical account of this approach can be found in Garrett J. DeWeese, "One Person, Two Natures: Two Metaphysical Models of the Incarnation," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 133. See also Klaus Issler, "Jesus Example: Prototype of the Dependent, Spirit-Filled Life," in *Jesus and Trinitarian Perspective*, 189-225; and Bruce A. Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

[29]Ibid., 212-13.

[30]John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (London: SCM, 1990), 166.

church further away from the supposedly non-philosophical presentation of Jesus found in the New Testament. Macquarrie thinks the monothelite controversy is especially guilty on this front.

> The best known of this new crop of [post-Chalcedonian] controversies was over the question whether Christ had one will or two wills, in consequence of the two natures. It was eventually decided that orthodoxy requires two wills (Third Council of Constantinople, 680, also known as the sixth ecumenical council). But this may be regarded as the *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole controversy.[31]

Leaving to one side Macquarrie's Harnackian tendency to pit the New Testament over against the philosophical (and supposedly unbiblical) argumentation of the church's later Christological reflection, his assessment of the will issue seems off the mark in any event. It is difficult to imagine that so many theologians from so many diverse quarters of Christianity over so many centuries of the church's history would be engaged in a theological dispute of no real importance. Surely this easy dismissal of a prominent Christological theme cannot be sustained.

Instead, this dissertation assumes that the will(s) debate serves, in many ways, as an important test case for how one approaches all of the issues related to the Incarnation and its concomitant doctrines. In other words, the position one takes on this issue has implications for the entire structure of one's theology. If wills belong to persons and Christ has only one will, then what implications does this position have for how one defines the traditional Trinitarian and Christological terms, "person" and "nature"? Can one truly accept Chalcedon's Definition, with its insistence that Christ's human nature possesses a "rational" human soul, if one denies that Christ possesses a distinct human mind and will? Furthermore, what implications does monothelitism have for the doctrine of the Trinity? If wills belong to persons and there are three persons in the Godhead, then it seems that one entailment of monothelitism is some form of social Trinitarianism, in which the three divine persons are viewed as distinct centers of

---

[31]Ibid.

consciousness and volition. And how does this debate touch upon the preeminent issue of the Christian gospel? Dyothelitism has often made its case on explicitly soteriological grounds: that which is unassumed is unhealed, to cite Gregory's famous axiom. If Christ did not assume a human will, then how can our human wills be redeemed from the curse of sin? These broader theological questions loom large in the monothelite debate. We will return to the Christological, Trinitarian, and soteriological implications of the will(s) debate in chapter 5, but presently we turn our attention to the thesis being advanced in this dissertation.

Thesis: A Reformed Defense of Dyothelitism

The thesis of this dissertation is that dyothelitism, especially it has been expressed in the biblical and theological categories of the Reformed tradition, provides a more satisfying model of the Incarnation than its recent monothelite alternatives. In order to explain the thesis further, this section will summarize several of its most salient features: (1) what is meant by "dyothelitism," (2) what is meant by "the biblical and theological categories of the Reformed tradition," and (3) what is meant by a theological "model." The next major section will address a fourth aspect of the thesis: (4) what it would mean for one model to be "more satisfying" than another (which is the question of theological method).

Dyothelitism

First, what is meant by the term "dyothelitism"? Only a preliminary definition and a few caveats can be provided at this point. A fuller understanding of the dyothelite view awaits the biblical, historical and theological investigation below. For now, it is sufficient to note that dyothelitism, as it is used here, denotes any model of the Incarnation which posits two centers of volition in the incarnate Christ, corresponding to his two natures. It is important to point out that the two-wills view does not necessarily

commit one to a specific view of theological anthropology. The two-wills view, for example, does not necessarily entail a kind of "faculty psychology," as some of its critics assume.[32] In other words, the dyothelite position does not require a definition of "will" as a discrete thing that is separate from, say, the mind or emotions of a person. Having said this, the dyothelite view, at least as it has been traditionally defended, has assumed some form of substance dualism with regard to human nature, though it does not commit one to any particular form of substance dualism.[33] The will is the volitional aspect (or perhaps, the volitional faculty) of a distinct soul-substance in human nature. When we speak of Christ having two wills, we mean that Christ has *two distinct capacities for willing* that correspond to *two distinct substances*, one divine and one human. He can will and act as God, and he can will and act as man, and these capacities are rooted in distinct, substantial, volitional equipage.[34] Prior to the Incarnation, the Son did not have a human capacity to will, but subsequent to the Incarnation he does have a human capacity to will, and he possesses this capacity without surrendering his divine capacity to will. Perhaps there is range of anthropological views that could be consistent with this fundamental insight of dyothelitism, but the view defended here assumes some form (but not any particular form) of substance dualism.[35]

Reformed Christology

Second, this work will seek to argue for dyothelitism from within the biblical

---

[32]Ibid.

[33]For a discussion of substance dualism and a biblical defense of one particular kind of dualism, see John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). See also, Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer, eds., *In Search of the Soul: Four Views on the Mind-Body Problem* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005).

[34]Indeed, he wills as both God and man simultaneously, according to the *extra Calvinisticum*. This point will be developed further below.

[35]For a discussion of the possibility of a monistic Chalcedonian Christology, see Oliver D. Crisp, *God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2009), 137-54.

and theological categories of the Reformed tradition. Reformed theology, as the term is used here, is not limited to those churches denominated under the rubric "Reformed" or "Presbyterian." The term "Reformed" can be construed in a narrower sense and in a broader sense. In the narrower construal, "Reformed" refers to those ecclesial traditions that hold to the historic Reformed confessions of faith—doctrinal statements which are both paedobaptistic and presbyterian in their ecclesiological distinctives.[36] In the broader construal, "Reformed" can refer to the more wide-ranging Calvinistic heritage, which extends its influence into various denominations and encompasses a more diverse array of ecclesiological convictions. Those in this broader circle are Calvinistic in their soteriology (the so-called "five points of Calvinism") and in some aspects of their broader biblical theology (e.g., some elements of covenant theology), but they part ways with Calvin and the narrower circle of Reformed theologians on some ecclesiological matters (such as the proper subjects of baptism or the proper form of church polity). In this broader sense, Calvinistic Congregationalists (such as John Owen and Jonathan Edwards) and Calvinistic Baptists (such as John Gill and Andrew Fuller) can rightly be called "Reformed," even if they do not belong to a "Reformed" or Presbyterian ecclesial body.

When we turn to Reformed *Christology*, it should be noted that the Reformed understanding of Christ is simply one expression of the classic Christology that emerged from the Patristic era and was accepted throughout the medieval period as well.[37] The classic Reformed authors, beginning with Calvin himself and continuing through the

---

[36]R. Scott Clark, *Recovering the Reformed Confession: Our Theology, Piety and Practice* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008). Clark would define "Reformed" *only* in this narrower sense. He would not accept the broader "Reformed" tradition as truly Reformed.

[37]This is not to diminish the significant Christological variations that one finds in the Patristic and medieval eras. There were different emphases in the East and the West. Additionally, some construed Christology more in line with Platonic metaphysics, while others cast these doctrines in a more Aristotelian mold.

period of Reformed orthodoxy, defended Trinitarian and Christological positions that were far from innovative. In other words, their Christological views were essentially consistent with the creedal formulations set forth by the ancient councils of the church. Reformed authors assumed the traditional understanding of the important Christological terms, "person" and "nature." They defended the traditional understanding of the communication of attributes (*communicatio idiomatum*) over against the doctrine's redefinition at the hands of the Lutherans.[38] Also in keeping with the tradition, Reformed theologians, insisted upon the doctrine that has come to be known as the *extra Calvinisticum* (although, as David Willis has pointed out, it could rightly be termed the *extra Catholicum* or *extra Patristicum*, given its prevalence among orthodox theologians of all stripes).[39] If anything distinguishes Reformed Christology from other approaches, it is its deliberate structuring of Christology around the work of Christ. Especially important for Calvin and the later Reformed tradition is Christ's three-fold office of prophet, priest and king (though, this, too, had historical precedents) and Christ's mediatorial role vis-à-vis the covenant of grace. These elements of the work of Christ were allowed to set the agenda for Reformed Christology in a way that they did not necessarily do so in medieval treatments of Christology.[40]

After examining several recent monothelite proposals (chapter 2), this dissertation will survey the dyothelite consensus that emerged in the Patristic and medieval era (chapter 3) before exploring the ways in which this dyothelite tradition was refracted through the prism of Reformed Christology (chapter 4). We will examine the

---

[38]For a bibliographic survey of the *communicatio idiomatum*, see John T. McNeill's note in John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 483n4.

[39]Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology*, 60.

[40]For a helpful discussion of the main contours of Calvin's Christology, see Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 27-35. See also Stephen Edmonson, *Calvin's Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

writings of several prominent Reformed theologians who explicitly defended the dyothelite view. This examination will pay special attention to Reformed commentaries (particularly on the Gethsemane narrative, the most common proof-text cited in favor of dyothelitism) as well as Reformed systematic treatments of the person of Christ.

In addition to surveying these explicit statements against monothelitism in the Reformed tradition, and the biblical texts on which they are based, this dissertation will also argue that dyothelitism is of a piece with Reformed Christology more generally. Jesus' words in Gethsemane provide the closest thing to a proof-text for dyothelitism found in Scripture, but even this text cannot stand alone. How one interprets this passage is colored by a range of hermeneutical and theological factors. This dissertation assumes that the case for or against dyothelitism must be made on dogmatic, no less than exegetical, grounds.[41] In other words, the case must be cumulative and comprehensive; it must be systematic-theological, encompassing biblical, historical, and metaphysical argumentation. As a result, throughout this dissertation, we will also examine how dyothelitism relates especially to three dogmatic loci: Christology proper, the Trinity, and soteriology. We will see how contemporary monothelitism impinges upon these doctrinal areas and also how dyothelitism influences their expression in Reformed dogmatics. In short, this dissertation provides something of a comparative analysis between contemporary monothelite proposals and Reformed dyothelitism, examining especially how these conflicting perspectives relate to Christological, Trinitarian, and soteriological considerations.

While this work seeks to defend dyothelitism from within certain Reformed categories, it is my hope that theologians from other traditions will also be helped and challenged by the biblical and theological case developed here. Dyothelitism is not a uniquely Reformed doctrine. It is a part of the church's broad Christological consensus

[41]For more on theological method, see the section below.

inherited from the Patristic Era. Before contemporary theologians decide to part ways with dyothelitism and to rehabilitate a position that the Christian tradition has deemed heretical, they at least ought to grapple with the biblical and theological rationale of the two-wills view. This burden is especially weighty given the fact that the church has spoken to this issue in the form of an ecumenical council. This dissertation shares the conviction of Oliver Crisp on this point: "It seems to me that someone dissenting from the findings of an ecumenical council of the Church should have a very good reason—indeed, a very good *theological* reason—for doing so."[42]

Models of the Incarnation

Third, this dissertation will make a case for preferring one *model* of the Incarnation over another. Though he reaches a different conclusion on the will(s) debate than the one presented in this dissertation, philosopher Garrett DeWeese provides a helpful definition of a theological model: "By *model* I mean a theoretical construct which is recognized to be analogical, which is used to aid understanding of data or experience, and which contributes to the extension of understanding a theory."[43] A theological model, then, is a conceptual tool, which seeks to preserve, elucidate, and defend what Scripture affirms on a given topic, even if it utilizes language and concepts not found in Scripture itself. As David Yeago has argued, doctrines may utilize *concepts* that are different than the ones found in the biblical text and yet render the same theological *judgments* as Scripture. The classic example that Yeago cites is Nicaea's *homoousios*—the affirmation that the Son is of the same substance as the Father. Yeago compares this concept to the language of Philippians 2, which speaks of Christ in terms that Isaiah uses

---

[42]Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, 35 (emphasis original).

[43]DeWesse, "One Person, Two Natures," 117.

with reference to YHWH—the Lord to whom every knee will bow and every tongue confess (Phil 2:9-10; Isa 45:23). Though their concepts are different, the Nicene Fathers and the apostle Paul render the same theological judgment concerning the person of Christ: he is to be identified with the Lord himself. The church's dyothelite formulas function in much the same way. While the precise language of dyothelitism is not used in the Bible, the two-wills affirmation may still reflect the same Christological judgment as Holy Scripture. Determining which conceptual model—monothelitism or dyothelitism—more faithfully renders the biblical judgment regarding Christ brings us to the matter of theological method.

Method: A Dogmatic Approach

The question remains: what makes one Christological model more satisfying than another? How does one determine the most "biblical" model, as described above? In terms of theological methodology, this work offers a *dogmatic* defense of dyothelitism. Dogmatic theology is closely related to systematic theology in that it seeks to account for all that Scripture teaches on a given subject and to articulate it in light of the contemporary context. But the term "dogmatic theology" makes more explicit the theologian's indebtedness to the Christian tradition, not least his or her own specific confessional heritage.[44] Nevertheless, as Herman Bavinck notes, dogmatics must not be confused with "symbolics," that is, the mere articulation of a specific confessional symbol. Dogmatic theology does not merely describe what a particular church or denomination believes; it also seeks to defend what Christians *ought* to believe based on the authority of Scripture read in light of the Christian tradition with a view to the faith

[44]My own ecclesiastical ties are Southern Baptist, a denomination that traces its origins to the Anglo-American Particular Baptist tradition. For a discussion of Baptist origins, see David W. Bebbington, *Baptists Through the Centuries: A Global History* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010). See also Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, 3rd ed. (Valley Forge: Judson, 1963), 11-57.

and practice of the contemporary church.[45]

Bavinck, in volume 1 of his magisterial *Reformed Dogmatics*, argues that dogmatics must account for three different aspects of the theological task: Scripture, tradition, and the Christian consciousness.[46] Scripture is the sole, authoritative source or principle of theology.[47] But dogmatic theology also must situate itself in the Christian tradition and articulate its doctrines in ways that further the faith of the church (that is, Christian consciousness). So, following Bavinck, the dogmatic method employed here involves three main phases: biblical theology, historical or "retrieval" theology, and systematic or constructive theology, which is the step of contemporary application, and roughly corresponds to Bavinck's concern with Christian consciousness.[48]

These three areas of theological concern—biblical theology, historical theology, and systematic theology—should not be seen as discrete steps in a linear process. These categories can be distinguished but not separated. The theological task is best seen as a "hermeneutical spiral," in which the theologian moves back and forth between theological assumptions and biblical corrections.[49] To put it simply, our

---

[45]Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 1:88.

[46]Ibid., 61, 84.

[47]Bavinck actually prefers the term "foundation" (*principium*) rather than "source" (*fons*) when it comes to the place of Scripture in the theological task. "Source" might imply that the relationship between Scripture and theology is "a mechanical one as though dogmas could be drawn from Holy Scripture like water from a well." Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:89. For a helpful discussion of the distinctive approaches of "doing" evangelical theology, see Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son: Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 38-62.

[48]John Frame offers a definition of theology in terms of application: Theology is "the application of God's Word by persons to all areas of life." John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987), 76. The application step is multi-faceted. Systematic theology, in this sense, seeks to apply the Word of God to matters of doctrine (the traditional loci of systematic theology), philosophy and apologetics (philosophical theology), and the church's faith and practice (practical theology).

[49]Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006).

theology affects our interpretation and our interpretation affects our theology.[50] Because of this interdependence, this dissertation will not always proceed neatly from one step to the next. Instead, the argument will proceed in four interrelated stages, which might be described as analytic theology, retrieval theology, biblical theology, and constructive theology.[51]

First, this dissertation will seek to analyze several of the most prominent examples of monothelitism in contemporary Christian theology. As mentioned above, three overlapping categories of contemporary monothelitism will be examined: analytic Christologies, kenotic Christologies, and Spirit Christologies. Here, we will utilize some of the tools of analytic theology in an attempt to shed light on the most pressing theological issues raised by these monothelite approaches. Second, this work will seek to retrieve the dyothelite logic of the past, paying special attention to the Reformed tradition, in an attempt to bring these historical voices into dialogue with the present.[52] This historical retrieval will lead us, third, back to the *principium* of Christian theology—the text of Holy Scripture. Here, we will examine some of the most relevant biblical texts for the will(s) debate and respond to the biblical arguments of monothelitism. Finally, we will arrive at the step of application: drawing Christological conclusions from the biblical data. This step of constructive theology will seek to show how the will(s) debate affects

---

[50]Acknowledging this interdependence does not, however, necessitate the rejection of biblical authority or the espousal of some kind of coherentist epistemology. For a helpful discussion of theological methodology that is sensitive to but also critical of certain "postconservative" approaches, see Stephen J. Wellum, "Postconservatism, Biblical Authority, and Recen Proposals for Re-Doing Evangelical Theology: A Critical Analysis," in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, ed. Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Helseth, and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 161-97.

[51]Analytic theology (philosophical theology in the analytic mode) is a really just a part of the broader category of systematic theology. So, in a sense, we begin and end with systematic or constructive theology, which we would expect given the nature of the hermeneutical spiral.

[52]On "retrieval theology," see John Webster, "Theologies of Retrieval," in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner and Iain Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 583-99. See also Oliver Crisp, *Retrieving Doctrine: Essays in Reformed Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011).

three loci of Christian theology: Christology proper, the Trinity, and soteriology.

The persuasiveness of either model—dyothelitism or monothelitism—will not be merely formulaic or scientific in nature. One cannot read a model of Christ's volitional life off the pages of Scripture in a simplistic fashion. Nor can a decision be made simply by recourse to self-evident propositions and logical deductions.[53] Instead, making a determination in this debate requires something closer to artistic imagination—the ability to see the relationship between the parts and the whole—and a kind of theological sensibility that is attuned to the Christological affirmations of Scripture and the subsequent Christian tradition.[54] In the end, it is my hope that this theological dialogue between contemporary monothelite proposals and the older dyothelite approaches will help to shape a theological imagination that enables readers to see with fresh eyes the biblical witness to Christ, who confessed to the Father in his hour of agony, "Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).

---

[53]So analytic theology, while useful in teasing out the logical implications of various theological proposals, has a limited utility. It cannot provide us with the content of Christian faith. Only Scripture, interpreted in light of tradition, can fill this role.

[54]For more on theological imagination, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical and Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 278-85.

CHAPTER 2

THE CHALLENGES OF CONTEMPORARY MONOTHELITISM

Introduction

This chapter examines and analyzes the challenges of contemporary monothelitism. The word "challenge" is being used here in two senses. First, this chapter will explore the challenges that contemporary monothelitism *poses* to the traditional two-wills view. The main arguments of three overlapping categories of monothelitism will be considered: abstractist christologies, kenotic christologies, and Spirit christologies.[1] Second, this chapter will offer a preliminary evaluation of these monothelite approaches by pointing up the main challenges that contemporary monothelitism *faces* when seeking to articulate its views over against the traditional dyothelite model. The main historical, biblical, and theological challenges will be considered. The subsequent chapters of this dissertation will explore these latter "challenges" further.

One more terminological clarification is in order. The term "contemporary" is not intended to delimit an exact period of time with any kind of technical specificity.[2] It is simply used to distinguish more recent defenses of monothelitism from the older monothelite controversies, particularly the original seventh century debate over Christ's

---

[1]I say that the categories are overlapping because some abstractists are kenoticists, kenoticists tend to be abstractists, and Spirit Christology proponents espouse a form of functional kenoticism. Still, the differences are sufficient to warrant separate treatment.

[2]Regarding the term "contemporary," Stephen Holmes has quipped, "[A]nything that [has] happened since the French Revolution should not be considered history but current affairs." Stephen R. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 182.

will(s).[3] The "contemporary" monothelite proposals examined here date, for most part, from the last several decades.

Contemporary Monothelitism: Three Overlapping Categories

The debate over the number of wills in the incarnate Christ is not an antiquated issue. In recent decades, Christian theologians and philosophers from several different quarters have called into question the traditional dyothelite position and have sought a rehabilitation of monothelitism.[4] This section will examine the main arguments offered by three overlapping categories of contemporary monoethelitism: abstractist Christologies, kenotic Christologies, and Spirit Christologies. It is important to note that the proponents of each of these approaches are still seeking to work within a Chalcedonian framework; they simply believe that the Sixth Ecumenical Council was an unnecessary and ultimately unhelpful post-Chalcedonian development.[5]

Abstractist Christologies

Contemporary approaches to the Incarnation can vary widely, even among

---

[3]Garrett DeWeese even wonders whether his own monothelite model belongs in the same category as the ancient monothelitsm that was condemned at the Sixth Ecumenical Council. This is a controversial claim that will be challenged in the analysis below. Garrett J. DeWeese, "One Person, Two Natures: Two Metaphysical Models of the Incarnation," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 144.

[4]To cite just one prominent example from each of the three branches of Christendom—Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant—the two-wills view was defended by John of Damascus, Thomas Aquinas, and John Calvin. These theologians and others will be examined in subsequent chapters.

[5]Because of this self-imposed Chalcedonian constraint, I will not discuss the works of systematicians such as Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wolfhart Pannenberg, who in addition to rejecting dyothelitism also call into question aspects of the Chalcedonian definition. For these two theologians on the will issue, see Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (London: T&T Clark, 1999), 394, and Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkens and Duane A. Priebe (London: SCM, 1968), 331-33. For a helpful summary of the arguments in favor of monothelitism, see Thomas A. Watts, "Two Wills in Christ? Contemporary Objections Considered in Light of a Critical Examination of Maximus the Confessor's *Disputation with Pyrrhus*," *WTJ* 71 (2009): 455-87.

those committed to Chalcedon's Definition.[6] One of the most helpful ways to categorize these various approaches is the distinction between transformational/abstractist models, on the one hand, and relational/concretist models, on the other.[7] In the former approach, the Son becomes incarnate by acquiring the abstract properties common to human nature, viewed as a universal. In the latter approach, the Son becomes incarnate by acquiring a certain relation to a specific human nature, viewed as a concrete particular. In abstractist models, the human nature that Christ assumes is general human nature, so that *his* human nature is identical to *my* human nature. In concretist models, the human nature that Christ assumes is a specific human nature, so that *his* human nature is distinct from *my* human nature.

Alvin Plantinga seems to be the first to suggest this abstractist/concretist terminology, but the actual positions go back much further.[8] Plantinga even suggests that the two views were represented at the Council of Chalcedon.

> It looks as if two quite different views of the Incarnation were (perhaps confusedly) present before Chalcedon and represented at Chalcedon. One was the view of Cyril of Alexandria and his followers: on this view, when the second person of the Trinity became incarnate and assumed human nature, what happened was that he, the human second person of the Trinity, acquired the property of being human; he acquired whatever property it is that is necessary and sufficient for being human . . . The human nature he assumed, then, was a property . . . On this first view, therefore, the second person of the Trinity assumed *human nature*, i.e. assumed a property which is necessary and sufficient for being a human being. On the second view, by contrast, what he assumed was *a* human nature, a specific human being. What happened was he became incarnate is that he adopted a peculiarly close and intimate relation to a certain concrete human being, a 'human nature' in the sense of a human

---

[6]For a helpful summary of the various approaches to the Incarnation on offer in contemporary analytic theology, see Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill, eds., *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[7]For a discussion of these distinctions, see Jonathan Hill's introduction in Hill and Marmodoro, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, 10-19. As Hill points out, transformationalists tend to be abstractists and relationalists tend to be concretists *provided they assume a Chalcedonian, two-natures framework*. A monophysite (one-nature proponent) could be a relationalist (Christ entered into a relation with a human) but maintain an abstractist view with regard to human nature.

[8]Ibid., 11.

being.[9]

Plantinga labels these two positions the "abstract nature" view and the "concrete nature" view. He goes on to argue that Chalcedon's Definition represented something of a compromise between the two positions, with some language pleasing to the abstractists and some language conducive to the concretists, though it tilted slightly in favor of the abstractists.[10]

The abstractist/concretist distinction is highly relevant for the monothelite debate. Some proponents of abstractism have argued explicitly that their position entails a monothelite approach to the Incarnation. Two examples of monothelite abstractism will be discussed below: the proposal of Alvin Plantinga and the collaborative proposal of J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig. It should also be noted that not all proponents of abstractism believe that this approach necessitates monothelitism. So, the proposals of two non-monothelite abstractists will also be discussed below: those of Thomas Morris and Richard Swinburne. It remains to be seen whether or not these latter two proposals can successfully avoid abstractism's apparent monothelite entailments.

Monothelite abstractism: Alvin Plantinga. As noted above, Alvin Plantinga argues that both abstractism and concretism were represented at Chalcedon. He also acknowledges that the concretist position entailed dyothelitism: "On this [concretist]

---

[9]Alvin Plantinga, "On Heresy, Mind, and Truth," *Faith and Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (April 1999): 183-84.

[10]Ibid., 184. This historical judgment is questionable. Plantinga cites Philip Schaff in support of his view. In his discussion of Chalcedon, Schaff argues that "the Logos assumed, not a human person (else we would have two persons, a divine and human) but a human nature which is common to us all." Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper & Row, 1877), 1:30. But this is a statement that all orthodox concretists could affirm. In assuming a concrete human nature, the Son did not assume a distinct human person, as the Nestorians claimed. Furthermore, the belief that the Son assumed a concrete human nature does not preclude the view that, in another sense, he assumed our common humanity. The anhypostatic/enhypostatic doctrine seems to affirm both. In one sense, Christ assumed the human nature common to all: his human nature was anhypostatic, without a separate human person. But in another sense, Christ assumed a specific human nature: his human nature was enhypostatic, given personhood by the Second Person of the Trinity. Christ has all of the properties common to humanity but he also possesses a concrete manifestation of these properties. For an argument along these lines, see Oliver D. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 79-89.

view of the matter, in the incarnate Christ there were two wills, one human and one divine, and two intellects, one human and one divine. This view is thought to protect the divinity of the second person of the Trinity."[11] This view sought to preserve Christ's divinity by making his human will the sole subject of suffering and temptation. The abstractist position, on the other hand, did not view Christ's human nature as a concrete particular. Instead, the abstractists maintained that Christ's human nature was a property that he assumed in the incarnation: the property of being a human being. The incarnation did not, therefore, involve the Son assuming an additional, concrete human will. So, Plantinga argues that the abstract nature view would seem to be at odds with the third council of Constantinople, where monothelitism was condemned. At Constantinople III, "it looks as if the concretist view is being adopted or at least given a leg up, and the abstractist rejected."[12]

But Plantinga explores one way in which abstractists could affirm the dyothelite decision at Constantinople III:

> Shall we say that duothelitism is the idea that the will of Christ had both the nature of a human will and the nature of a divine will, in the abstract sense of 'nature'? The partisans of the abstract view could happily accept that. Or shall we say that duothelitism is the idea that there are two distinct concrete wills (supposing that in fact a will is a concrete object of some kind)? The concretists would happily accept *that*, and then is looks as if it's the abstractists that are tugging the laboring oar.[13]

But there is no evidence that anyone at Constantinople III entertained the first kind of interpretation. To say that Christ's numerically singular will has two natures—both divine and human—is not sufficient to avoid monothelitism from the perspective of the council. Constantinople III declared that Christ possesses "two natural willings or wills . . . without separation, without change, without partition, without confusion" and that the

---

[11]Plantinga, "On Heresy, Mind, and Truth," 184.

[12]Ibid., 185.

[13]Ibid., 186.

"two natural wills [are] not contrary [to each other], God forbid, as the impious heretics have said [they would be], but his human will following, and not resisting or opposing, but rather subject to his divine and all-powerful will."[14] Notice that the four-fold privative of Chalcedon—without separation, change, partition or confusion—is transferred from the *natures* (at Chalcedon) to the *wills* (at Constantinople). It seems clear that the bishops at Constantinople believed that wills belong to natures, and since Christ has two natures, he must, by Chalcedonian logic, have two wills.

For Plantinga to suggest that a numerically singular will with two natures might satisfy these dyothelite criteria stretches the council's decision too thin. As Oliver Crisp has pointed out, Plantinga's suggestion that a mere reduplicative property—Christ "has a human will *qua* human soul of Christ and a divine will *qua* divine soul of the Word"—could serve a legitimate interpretation of Constantinople does not seem to be sufficient to live up to Constantinople's standard, namely, two distinct wills in the incarnate Christ. To be fair, Plantinga is only suggesting a possible way for an abstractist to interpret Constantinople III; he admits that the council tilts in favor of the concretist/dyothelite position. Thus, for Plantinga, abstractism's rejection of a concrete human will in Christ seems to necessitate at least some form of monothelitism.

Monothelite abstractism: J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig. Another Christological proposal that has connected the dots between abstractism and monothelitism is the one offered by evangelical philosophers J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig in their book *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*.[15] After a survey of the various Christological controversies throughout history, Moreland and

---

[14]The Statement of Faith of the Third Council of Constantinople (Sixth Ecumenical), in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward R. Hardy (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1954), 383.

[15]J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003).

Craig offer their own "proposed Christology" under three headings:

> 1. We postulate with Chalcedon that in Christ there is one person who exemplifies two distinct and complete natures, one human and one divine . . .
>
> 2. We postulate with Apollinarius that the Logos was the rational soul of Jesus of Nazareth . . .
>
> 3. We postulate that the divine aspects of Jesus' personality were largely subliminal during his state of humiliation.[16]

The second of these postulates is especially controversial, since it suggests a significant revision to the orthodox doctrine of the incarnation by seeking to rehabilitate a heretical point of view. But, in many respects, the authors' interpretation of the first postulate lays the groundwork for the last two.

When discussing the Chalcedonian formulation, Moreland and Criag maintain,

> In one sense the Alexandrian theologians were right in postulating a single nature in Christ, in the sense, that is, of an individual essence that serves to designate the unique individual who is Jesus Christ. But when the framers of Chalcedon affirmed two natures in Christ, they were not talking about abstract individual essences, but kind essences or natures that serve to demarcate certain natural kinds of thing.[17]

Moreland and Craig are here drawing on Thomas Morris's Christological use of the individual essence/kind essence distinction. According to Morris, "every individual has some set of properties essential for being the individual it is."[18] This set of properties is what Morris called an "individual-nature" or an "individual-essence." Since an individual-nature is comprised of all the properties essential to an individual, it follows that an individual cannot have more than one individual-nature. But, according to Morris, it "does not follow from this that no individual has more than one kind-nature."[19] A kind-nature "can be understood as constituted by a sharable set of properties individually necessary and jointly sufficient for membership in that kind." Note that both

---

[16]Ibid., 606, 608, 610.

[17]Ibid., 606.

[18]Thomas Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 35.

[19]Ibid., 40.

categories of natures—individual and kind—are defined by Morris in terms of abstract properties.[20] The same is true for Moreland and Craig, who, like Morris, apply the distinction to the incarnation: "In affirming that the incarnate Christ has two natures, the church fathers were stating that Christ exemplified all the properties that constitute humanity and all the properties that make up deity."[21]

As in Morris's Christology, Moreland and Craig argue that a single individual can be the bearer of divine and human properties without recourse to kenoticism's redefinition of the divine nature. But if they are reluctant to embrace the revisions of kenotic Christology, they do not shy away from a more significant revision to classic Christology. In their second postulate, Moreland and Craig attempt to rehabilitate the Apollinarian view that the person of the Son serves as the rational soul of Jesus. They claim that "Apollinarius's view was radically defective as it stood. For a complete human natures involves more than a hominid body." Moreland and Craig seek to revise Apollinarius by arguing that the pre-incarnate Christ already possessed the requisite properties for humanity in archetypal form. So, in assuming a hominid body, the Logos brings to it these latent human properties and, therefore, creates a complete human nature in the hypostatic union. "Thus God already possesses the properties sufficient for human personhood even prior to the Incarnation, lacking only corporeality."[22]

But this way of framing the incarnation raises several questions. Does the Logos not assume more than mere corporeality in the incarnation? Does he not also

---

[20]This is a major difference between Morris's view and that of the medieval theologians. There are also similarities between the two approaches. In some respects, Thomas Aquinas's appropriation of Aristotle's primary/secondary substance distinction parallels Morris's distinction between individual and kind essences, respectively. The major difference is that, for the Aristotlean Thomas, secondary substances are concrete particulars not abstract universals.

[21]Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*, 606. The authors make it explicit that the Son's two kind natures are "abstract kind-natures" (609). Note that they, like Plantinga, interpret Chalcedon through an abstractist lens.

[22]Ibid., 609.

assume all of the limitations of normal humanity? Does he not, for example, assume a human way of thinking, including ignorance of certain facts? In the language of Chalcedon, does the Logos not assume a "rational soul" in the incarnation? It is at this point that Moreland and Craig introduce their third postulate. They appeal to the notion of "subliminal knowledge" to make sense of how a single mind can possess both omniscience and ignorance simultaneously.[23] Citing the analogy of depth psychology, the authors maintain that Christ's divine knowledge was largely subliminal to him during his earthly ministry (his "state of humiliation"). The Son might be omniscient, but in his incarnate state, he evidently does not know it. The full scope of his divine knowledge lies hidden "like an iceberg beneath the water's surface" only subconsciously known to the Logos. This limitation is part and parcel of the Logos's "self-emptying act of humiliation."[24]

This view of the Son's knowledge assumes a single mind and a single will in the person of the Son. Moreland and Craig see the implication and make it explicit: "The model here proposed implies monothelitism, since the Logos, as the mind of Jesus of Nazareth, has but a single will."[25] If the Logos's divine knowledge is merely a subliminal facet of his personality, then it obviously cannot be said to possess a distinct volitional capacity. It belongs to the one will of the Logos, along with his human knowledge. But what does this position do to one's commitment to orthodoxy, since the church clearly denounced this monothelite position at Constantinople III? Having denied (or at least radically redefined) Chalcedon's rejection of Apollinarianism, the authors are likewise prepared to dispense with Constantinople's rejection of monothelitism. "This

---

[23]Ibid., 610-13.

[24]Ibid., 612. So, the authors espouse a form for kenoticism after all, albeit in functional rather than ontological form. For the distinction between ontological and functional kenoticism, see Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, 119.

[25]Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*, 611.

implication of the model is in our view unobjectionable, since dyothelitism, despite its conciliar support, finds no warrant in Scripture."[26] The authors argue that the most common proof text cited in favor of dyothelitism, the Gethsemane narrative ("Yet, not my will but yours be done," Luke 22:42), offers no such decisive proof. Rather than describing the struggle of Christ's human will with the divine will, this passage merely describes "an interaction between Jesus' will ('my will') and the Father's will ('yours')." The persons of the Godhead must, therefore, possess numerically distinct wills.[27] In the incarnation, the Son's will became "the will of the man Jesus of Nazareth."[28]

Two distinct wills would make it difficult, according to Moreland and Craig, to preserve the unity of Christ's person. Morris's two-minds proposal, in which the Logos's human mind exists in an asymmetrical relation to his divine mind (the latter has access to the former, but not the former to the latter), is offered as an example of this difficulty. Though Reformed theologians such as Ulrich Zwingli held something like this two-minds approach, Moreland and Craig maintain that such a view "threatens to lapse into Nestorianism," with two distinct persons represented in the incarnation.[29] In sum, Moreland and Craig's version of abstractism, like Plantinga's, entails a one-mind/one-will view of the incarnation.

Dyothelite abstractism? Thomas Morris and Richard Swinburne. As discussed above, Thomas Morris's two-minds proposal represents a form of abstractism. The Logos's two kind-essences are two clusters of abstract properties, which, according

---

[26]Ibid.

[27]This interpretation assumes a social view of the Trinity, with each member of the Godhead possessing numerically distinct psychological and volitional capacities. But the authors would happily accept this implication, since they argue for a peculiar form of social trinitarianism in the same volume. Ibid., 587-95.

[28]Ibid., 611.

[29]Ibid., 612.

to Morris, are able to be instantiated in a single individual without contradiction, provided the individual has two distinct minds. This proposal sounds as if it is able to accommodate a two-wills position, since mind and will are so closely related. In his classic work, The *Logic of God Incarnate*, Morris nowhere addresses the monothelite debate, but his view could be taken as a two-wills model, albeit in abstractist, rather than the typical concretist, form.

But others are not so sure that Morris's proposal can accomplish this dyothelite accommodation. Thomas Senor, for example, has argued that Morris's theory "apparently collapses into monothelitism, a heresy condemned at the Third Council of Constantinople."[30] How so? Echoing the critique of John Hick, Senor explains that Morris's two-minds proposal faces a dilemma: if the Son's divine mind possesses an asymmetrical relation with his human mind, how is this relationship any different than his relationship to every other human mind? Call this the *uniqueness problem* for Morris's approach.[31] What is unique about the Son's relationship with this particular human mind, the mind of Jesus of Nazareth? Senor explains Morris's answer:

> Morris's answer is that unlike us, the causal and cognitive powers of the earthly mind are none other than the cognitive and causal powers of God the Son. But the rest of us have independent cognitive and causal powers. Our mental powers are brought about by God but they are numerically distinct; the powers of Jesus just are the powers of God the Son.[32]

But in Senor's view, this move by Morris entails monothelitism, because by placing causal and cognitive powers within the purview of the *person* of the Son, and not his two

---

[30]Thomas Senor, "An Ecumenical Kenotic Christology," in Marmodoro and Hill, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, 95. See also John Hick, "The Logic of God Incarnate," *Religious Studies* 25, no. 4 (December 1989): 409-23.

[31]This problem is faced by concretist proposals as well, especially those categorized as "compositional." Compositional approaches maintain that the Incarnate Christ is composed of various parts: the divine Son, the divine nature, and the human body and soul (or body/soul composite). For more on compositionalism, see the contributions of Brian Leftow, Oliver Crisp, and Thomas Flint in Marmodoro and Hill, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*. For a response to the uniqueness problem from a concretist/compositional perspective, see Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, 24-27.

[32]Senor, "An Ecumenical Kenotic Christology," 94.

minds, Morris is evidently arguing that "the two minds share a will." Morris is assuming that "minds are individuated strictly by sets of mental states" and not also by causal powers.[33] But causal powers are presumably part of what we mean when we speak of volition or "the will." So, it seems that Senor and Hick rightly discern the monothelite implications of Morris's response to the uniqueness problem. If the Son's two minds are united because they share common causal powers, namely, those of the Son, then the two minds evidently share a numerically singular will.

Richard Swinburne offers another abstractist proposal that seeks to accommodate dyothelitism. According to Swinburne, the incarnate Son has a divine way of thinking and acting and a human way of thinking and acting. Likewise, with regard to volition, "there was a human kind of willing and acting and a divine kind, and Christ had both, since he acted and willed in both divine and human ways."[34] This dual volition is necessary in order make sense of Christ's weaknesses and temptations. In his human way of thinking/willing/acting, he is subject to temptation, but in his divine way of thinking/willing/acting, he is not.

Swinburne goes even further. These two ways of willing must remain "to some extent separated." Swinburne explains:

> In particular the two wills are kept to some extent separate, so that when Christ wills under human conditions, he wills under the conditions, not of perfect humanity, but under conditions more like those of our humanity, i.e. conditions of ignorance of some of the remote consequences of his actions, limited awareness of power, and open to the influence of desire. The "subjection" of the human will to the divine must then be read only as a subjection which ensured no wrongdoing, but not in the more full-blooded way that always Christ had to will as he would will if he knew all the possibilities open to him and was not subject to influence by desire.[35]

Swinburne is attempting to preserve the full human experience of the incarnate Son. The

---

[33]Ibid., 95.

[34]Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 198.

[35]Ibid., 208-09.

Son did not, as the medieval scholastics argued, possess the beatific vision from the moment of his conception. He did not operate under the conditions of "perfect humanity," but instead experienced life with typical human weakness. What is noteworthy for the monothelite debate is Swinburne's insistence that the Son possesses a "human will" that is subjected to the divine will. Swinburne discusses the divided will of Christ in the context of the Son's limitations and temptations. According to Swinburne,

> Now a divine individual could not give up his knowledge, and so his beliefs; but he could, in becoming incarnate in Christ and acquiring a human belief-acquisition system, through his choice, keep the inclinations to belief resulting therefrom to some extent separate from his divine knowledge system. . . . The separation of belief-systems would be a voluntary act, knowledge of which was part of the divine knowledge-system but not of the human knowledge system.[36]

This way of framing the Son's divided mind has utility for Swinburne with regard to the question of Christ's impeccability. Swinburne maintains that the incarnate Christ was not free to sin, but he was free to abstain from supererogatory acts; he was free to "allow himself to make a choice under the influence of desire to do a lesser good."[37] He does so because, in his human way of thinking, he is not omniscient; he does not always know, in his humanity, what the greatest good would be in a given situation. But since such acts are supererogatory, no moral demerit is involved. So, in the passage already cited, Swinburne concludes that "Christ wills . . . under the conditions, not of perfect humanity, but under conditions more like our humanity." Christ's "human will" was subjected to the "divine will" in the sense that he never chose to sin, even if he sometimes chose a lesser good.

Swinburne's proposal appears to be a clear case of dyothelitism. But as with Morris's proposal, the question remains as to whether or not Swinburne's abstractism will permit this dyothelite move. According to Swinburne's version of Cartesian

---

[36]Ibid., 202.

[37]Ibid., 208.

dualism, persons just are souls, which provide the principle of identity for individuals. Individual souls, whether human or divine, possess a mental life. Indeed, being the subject of a mental life is what it means to be a person. Since the incarnate Christ is a single person, he possesses only one mental life, albeit a divided one, in Swinburne's view. Swinburne is more consistent than Morris in this regard, because he speaks of the Son's mental life in terms of "two parts of a divided mind."[38]

So apparently the mind of Christ is singular, even if divided. It seems that Swinburne assumes the same thing with regard to Christ's will. The Son's choice to accept a limited, human belief-system was "a voluntary act, knowledge of which was part of the divine knowledge-system but not of the human knowledge system." Presumably, this voluntary act belongs to the person of Christ—his soul, who he is as an individual. Christ did not *possess* a rational human soul, if one means by that locution that he possesses an individual human nature. The Son simply *is* a rational soul, who, by virtue of the incarnation, has assumed a human way of thinking as an abstract property. According to Swinburne, the Chalcedonian term "rational soul" later "began to take on a life of its own—not being a human way of thinking that belonged to Christ, but more a soul in the sense in which I have used the term," that is, as an individual, rational person.[39] Swinburne has in mind here the later medieval Christologies, such as the one defended by Thomas Aquinas, who argued that Christ's human nature was a secondary substance supposited by the Son.[40] According to Swinburne, Christ's human nature—more specifically, his human soul—is not a substance but a property assumed by the Son. So, even though Swinburne appears to use the language of dyothelitism, he does not

---

[38]Ibid., 202.

[39]Ibid., 213.

[40]Marilyn McCord Adams spells out further the contrast between the medieval view and Swinburne's proposal. See Marilyn McCord Adams, *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 108-143.

mean to imply that the Son possesses a concrete human will distinct from the divine will. Apparently, since the Son is a soul, he possesses only one will, though it becomes a divided will upon the incarnation.[41]

Abstractist Christologies: Conclusion. Abstractist Christologies begin with the assumption that the human nature that the Son assumed in the incarnation is a set of abstract properties, not a concrete, particular human nature, complete with a concrete mind and will. Some abstractists, such as Plantinga, Moreland and Craig, make explicit the monothelite entailments of such a view. If Christ simply assumed the property of being a human being, then it is erroneous, and potentially Nestorian, to argue that he assumed a discrete human will. Moreland and Craig go so far as to argue for a form of Apollinarianism, in which the pre-incarnate Son already possessed, in latent form, the properties necessary for human personhood. So, in the incarnation, he simply assumed a hominid body and brought to it all the requisite properties needed to form a complete human person. Other abstractist Christologies, such as those espoused by Morris and Swinburne, seek to make room for two minds and two wills in the incarnate Christ. However, because of their abstractism, these scholars, as well, face difficulties in consistently maintaining two distinct wills in the incarnate Son. Instead, their proposals seem to assume a single, albeit divided, will, which belongs to the singular soul of the Son.

The abstractist approach points up a major question that all contemporary Christologians must face: did the Son assume a concrete human nature, as much of the tradition (especially the medieval tradition) has argued? Or did the Son simply assume the property of being a human being? To put it differently, did the Son assume a human

---

[41]Perhaps this explains why Swinburne is ambivalent about the Sixth Ecumenical Council: "I do not think this declaration [of two natural wills] added very much significant to the Chalcedonian definition." Swinburne, *The Christian God*, 198.

soul or did he become a human soul? Should we adopt a relational model of the incarnation (the Son assumed a particular relation to an individual human nature) or a transformational model (the Son was transformed into a human being)? This is not the kind of decision that can be made simply by citing a series of scriptural proof-texts. It is, instead, a broader, more systematic question that is related to several other questions, both theological and philosophical. What is a person? What is a nature? Where does the will belong: in the person or in the natures? What is the proper metaphysics of assumption? How do these decisions affect not only one's Christology but also one's approach to the Trinity? For example, if persons *just are* souls, and souls possess individual mental and volitional capacities, then are there three minds/wills within the Godhead? These and other crucial questions await answers in the chapters to follow. For the present purposes, it is sufficient to note the significance of the abstractist/concretist debate for the monothelite controversy: abstractism seems invariably to entail some form of monothelitism.

More space has been devoted to discussing abstractism than the two subsequent approaches, for two reasons. First, abstractism poses the most significant philosophical challenge to the traditional two-wills view. If dyothelitism is to remain a viable Christological option in contemporary systematic theology, it must wrestle with the challenges set forth by the abstractist position. Second, there is a sense in which the subsequent categories—kenotic Christology and Spirit Christology—are simply subcategories of the abstractist approach. As with abstractism, both kenoticism and Spirit Christology deny that Christ assumed a concrete human nature, complete with a concrete human mind and will. Both argue, in abstractist fashion, that "wills" belong to *persons* not *natures*. Therefore, by Chalcedonian logic, Christ can have only one will. It seems, then, that dyothelitism's fate rests with the credibility of the concretist option.

Kenotic Christologies

A second and related category of contemporary monothelitism can be found in the kenotic Christologies that have been proposed in recent years. Kenotic Christology takes its names from Philippians 2:7, which states that Christ "emptied himself" (*ekenosen*) by taking the form of a servant. From this passage and other biblical and theological considerations, kenoticists maintain that the Son had to surrender certain divine attributes in order to become a human being.

Kenotic Christology: A very brief history. If Protestant Liberalism represented a defection from dyothelitism from outside of the Chalcedonian tradition, kenotic Christology represented a rejection of the two-wills approach that, for the most part, sought to work within the Chalcedonian framework.[42] Kenoticism finds its roots in nineteenth century German Lutheranism, but there were manifestations of the kenotic approach in Britain as well.[43] Continental kenoticists included such theologians as Gottfried Thomasius (1802-75), J. H. August Ebrard (1818-88), and Wolfgang Friedrich Gess (1819-91). British kenoticism was represented by Hugh Ross Mackintosh (1870-91), P. T. Forsyth (1848-1921), and Charles Gore (1853-1932).

As noted in chapter 1, kenotic Christology takes its cues from Philippians 2:7 ("he emptied himself" or "he made himself nothing") and maintains that Christ had to

---

[42]However, there were some radical forms of kenoticism, especially associated with Gess, that required significant adaptations not only to classic Christology but also to classic conceptions of the divine nature.

[43]Lutheran Christology had already made some noteworthy revisions to classic Christology through its innovations with regard to the *communicatio idiomatum*. According to the classic conception of the communication of properties, the attributes which belong to each of Christ's natures are communicated to his person, so that both sets of attributes—human and divine—can be predicated of the same person. According to Luther and his followers, the *communicatio idiomatum* involved not only predication but also actual transference of properties from the divine to the human nature of Christ. If classic Christology involves both a unity principle (one person) and a distinction principle (two natures), this Lutheran radicalization of the unity principle in Christology eventually led to the kenotic approach. The kenoticists essentially reversed the direction of transference in the Lutheran *communicatio*, that is, they maintained that in order for the Son to become a human he must divest himself of certain divine properties; he must become humanized, in a sense.

empty himself of certain (non-essential) attributes in order to become a man. Nineteenth-century kenotic proponents were responding, in large measure, to the rise of critical scholarship, with its emphasis on the humanity and historical contingency of Jesus of Nazareth. But rather than simply surrender the creeds of the church, as many biblical scholars did, kenoticists charted a mediating course, seeking to reconcile the contemporary historical research with the church's confessional heritage.[44] Kenoticists wanted to maintain the full divinity of Christ, but in order to do so they had to propose a distinction between two kinds of divine attributes. If the Son gave up some divine attributes in his incarnation, and yet he remains fully divine, then the attributes he gave up must not be essential for divinity. A common way of stating this distinction is found in Thomasius: the Son retained his "immanent" attributes (love, truth, holiness, etc.) but he surrendered his "relative" attributes (omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, etc.).[45]

Kenoticism waned in popularity both in Britain and on the continent because it represented an unstable middle ground between Liberal Christologies, on the one hand, and more traditional Christologies, on the other. Liberals were wary of kenoticism because it appeared too conservative; kenoticism wanted to maintain the metaphysical framework of Chalcedon: two natures united in one person. But Liberalism was ready to part ways with this conciliar definition. Friedrich Schleiermacher had already questioned the entire enterprise of positing a two-natured Christ. Adolf von Harnack had criticized the creedal formulations for being too "Greek" and insufficiently informed by the Hebrew worldview of the Bible. Conservatives, on the other hand, objected to kenoticism because it required too many revisions to the classic conception of Christ as well as too many adjustments to the classic conception of the divine nature. The main

---

[44]Thomas R. Thompson, "Nineteenth-Century Kenotic Christology: The Waxing, Waning, and Weighing of a Quest for a Coherent Christology," in *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying God*, ed. C. Stephen Evans (Oxford: Oxford University, 2006), 77.

[45]Ibid., 83.

conservative objection to kentocism was that it threatened the true deity of Christ.[46]

So, in many ways, kenoticism lay dormant for a century or more. To be sure, as Thomas Thompson argues, "the kenotic motif did not suffer the eclipse that formal kenoticism did." God's self-emptying in Christ remained an important theme in many Christologies. Nevertheless, kenoticism as a distinctive and robust defense of the incarnation had been eclipsed by other approaches. But in recent years, the kenotic approach has experienced something of a revival, with several philosophers, theologians, and biblical scholars seeking to rejuvenate the kenotic enterprise. These scholars believe that the kenotic approach provides a more coherent and more biblically and philosophically satisfying account of the Incarnation.

Several iterations of the kenotic approach appeared in the 1980s and 1990s. Theologians such as David Brown, Ronald Feenstra, and Cornelius Plantinga revived the kenotic project, suggesting that it still had purchase as a viable way of making sense of the incarnation.[47] Philosophers Stephen Davis and C. Stephen Evans also joined the cause, defending kenoticism as the best way to defend the coherency of the incarnation.[48] More recently, Thomas Senor has given a rigorous defense of the kenotic approach. But the most thoroughgoing defense of kenoticism came in a 2006 work edited by Evans, *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God*.[49] This book brought together scholars from a variety of disciplines—New Testament studies, philosophy, history, and

---

[46]Ibid., 95-102, offers more on the liberal and conservative criticisms of kenoticism.

[47]See, for example, these authors' contributions to the 1989 volume, *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays*, ed. Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989).

[48]See, for example, C. Stephen Evans, "The Self-Emptying of Love: Some Thoughts on Kenotic Christology," in *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, S.J., and Gerald O'Collins, S.J. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[49]C. Stephen Evans, ed., *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

systematic theology—in an effort to show the viability of the kenotic theory. Today, any attempt to wrestle with the difficult questions clustered around the doctrine of the incarnation must reckon with this impressive cadre of kenotic defenders.

Kenotic monothelitism. So, what does kenoticism have to do with the monothelite controversy? It seems that one entailment of the kenotic view is a one-willed Christ. To state the matter simply, if the Son of God is contracted to human limitations in the incarnation, then the traditional dyothelite model, in which the incarnate Son has access to the divine will, is no longer viable. There is no division in the will of the Son. In the incarnation, the Son simply gives up his capacity to function in certain non-essential divine ways. Furthermore, as with all monothelites, kenoticists maintain that mind and will belong properly to the united *person* of the Son, not to his two *natures*. Therefore, according to the constraints of Chalcedon, the Son can have only one will, if one is to avoid Nestorianism.

Some kenoticists explicitly reject the two-wills doctrine. Forsyth, for example, asserts that "there could not be two wills, or two consciousnesses, in the same personality, by any psychological possibility now credible. We could not have in the same person both knowledge and ignorance of the same thing."[50] Similarly, Mackintosh argues that "we cannot predicate of Him two consciousnesses or two wills; the New Testament indicates nothing of the kind, nor indeed is it congruous with an intelligible psychology."[51] Three observations are in order with regard to these assertions. First, the appeal to psychology is noteworthy because it reveals the presuppositions that lie behind these kenotic approaches. Forsyth and Mackintosh are operating under the assumption that Christ possesses a psychology sufficiently analogous to our own and that our

---

[50]P. T. Forsyth, *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ* (Boston: Pilgrim, 1909), 319.

[51]H. R. Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1912), 470.

understanding of it must remain within the constraints of prevailing psychological theories. The historical Jesus is the starting point. Forsyth makes this point explicit: "If there was a personal pre-existence in the case of Christ it does not seem possible to adjust it to the historical Jesus without some doctrine of Kenosis."[52] Therefore, our view of Christ's mental and volitional life must conform, in some important respects, to our knowledge of ordinary human psychology. But many (most?) theologians in the Christian tradition would demur. Much of the history of Christological reflection prior to the rise of kenoticism was taken up with explaining the very paradoxes that Forsyth is denying: for example, that the Son can be both omniscient and ignorant at the same time. Further, many in the tradition have argued that the incarnation is *sui generis*—that it cannot be entirely analogous to any other psychological state of affairs.[53] Even if it is true that ordinary human psychology cannot account for two wills in one person, this does not mean that the infinite person of the Son cannot subsist in two distinct natural wills.[54]

Second, and related, Forsyth and Mackintosh both seem to be redefining "person" in some significant ways. Both seem to be equating "person" with "personality" or "psychology." But the traditional understanding of "person" is not consistent with this equation. Whether the definition is Boethian (an individual substance of a rational nature), Thomist (a *suppositum* in a nature), or Calvinian (a subsistence in a

---

[52]Forsyth, *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ*, 294.

[53]For example, John of Damascus comments on the limitations of a body/soul analogy when it comes to the incarnation, "In the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, however, it is impossible to have a common species, for there never was, nor is, nor ever will be another Christ of divinity and humanity, in divinity and humanity, the same being perfect God and perfect man. Hence, in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, one cannot speak of one nature made up of divinity and humanity as one can in the case of an individual made up of soul and body." John of Damascus, *Writings*, trans. Frederic H. Chase, Jr., Fathers of the Church (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1958), 273.

[54]Thomas argues from the Son's infinity that it is possible for him to supposit two substantial natures, even though it would not be possible for finite human persons to do so. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, ed. Daniel J. Sullivan (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), 3.3.2.

nature), traditional understandings of "person" do not seem consistent with kenoticist usage. Personality and psychology are more appropriately placed at the level of "nature" rather than "person," in a more traditional view. How one defines these most crucial Christological terms is a question that every metaphysical accounting of the incarnation must face.

Third, it is highly significant that these kenotic views reject not only dyothelitism but also the doctrine that has come to be known as the *extra Calvinisticum*.[55] In short, the *extra* denies that the Son is limited to his human nature in the Incarnation. Instead, the Son continues to retain his divine attributes (such as omnipresence) and divine functions (such as the work of providence) even after he is hypostatically united to a human nature. But kenoticism explicitly denies this traditional understanding of the incarnation.[56]

For Forsyth and other kenoticists, the Incarnation involves a real, if voluntary, limitation placed upon the one mind and will of the Son. As a result, kenoticists reject the traditional view that the Son retains his divine power and knowledge in the Incarnation (or at least during his state of humiliation). In order for him to experience a genuinely human life, the Son cannot have recourse to some hidden divine will. So, for kenoticists, Christ's will is singular and is tied to his person, not his two natures. As in the abstractist view, the will is seen as a property of persons, not a faculty that inheres in natures. Also similar to the abstractist view, kenoticism defines "person" in such a way

---

[55]The term was derisively coined by Lutheran polemicists in the post-Reformation period. The Lutherans argued against the *extra*, claiming that it led to a divided Christ. Instead, they argued that the communication of properties in some ways deified the humanity of Christ. They followed Luther in arguing for the ubiquity of Christ's body. See the *Formula of Concord*, article VIII, in *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds*, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1919). Also see Wolfhart Pannenberg's discussion of the Reformation debates over the communication of attributes in his *Jesus—God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkens and Duane A. Priebe (London: SCM, 2002), 338-42.

[56]On the historical pedigree of the extra Calvinisticum, see E. David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-Called* Extra Calvinisticum *in Calvin's Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 26-60.

that it is essentially equivalent to the traditional notion of "soul."[57] Persons, including the persons of the Trinity, are "response-able centres or subjects of thought and action," which require "psychological equipage, such as will, understanding, and consciousness."[58] Because "will" inheres in the person of the Son, rather than his two natures, he can only possess one will. In many ways, the kenotic view can be seen as a subset of the abstractist view—but a subset that uniquely emphasizes the Son's *kenosis*.

Kenotic Christologies: Conclusion. As Thomas Morris argues, kenoticism represents the most viable current alternative to the more traditional two-minds, two-wills approach.[59] It begins with the historical given of Jesus' human experience. In a sense, it has strong biblical warrant to do so; the New Testament can speak of Christ in terms of genuine human limitations (Mark 13:32; Luke 2:52). But the theological and Christological innovations of kenoticism are significant. First, kenoticism must alter the classic conception of God. No longer are God's attributes seen as necessary to his existence. Instead, certain metaphysical attributes are said to be contingent and thus "give-upable," to modify one contemporary kenoticist's memorable term.[60] Traditionally, all of the divine attributes were believed to be essential to God's existence. Classic theologians such as Anselm, Aquinas, and Calvin attributed to God modal perfection. God not only possesses omnipotence, but *necessary* omnipotence. He is not only omniscient; he is *necessarily* omniscient. He cannot be otherwise. Therefore, the

---

[57]Thomas R. Thompson and Cornelius Plantinga Jr., "Trinity and Kenosis," in *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying God*, ed. C. Stephen Evans (Oxford: Oxford University, 2006), 178.

[58]Ibid., 179.

[59]Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate*, 89-102.

[60]Stephen T. Davis, "Is Kenosis Orthodox?" in *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying God*, ed. C. Stephen Evans (Oxford: Oxford University, 2006), 118.

theological cost of espousing kenoticism will prove too high for many to pay.[61]

Second, kenoticists are forced to make several consequential revisions to classic Christology. Most fundamentally, kenoticism essentially redefines the two key Christological terms: person and nature. According to kenoticists, a person is a "responsible centre," complete with mind, will and emotions. Thus, mind, will, and emotions are stripped from the *nature* of an entity, where they traditionally resided, and loaded up, so to speak, into the *person*. The nature is thus reduced to a person's attributes, with the psychological and volitional equipage expunged. Furthermore, the kenotic approach requires a rejection of the widely held *extra Calvinisticum*, which affirms that the Son retains the full range of divine attributes and functions, even in the incarnation.

Spirit Christologies

The Spirit Christologies that have arisen in the wake of the late Gerald Hawthorne's influential book, *The Presence and the Power*, comprise the final category of contemporary monothelitism.

Hawthorne's proposal. "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt 12:28). In this verse, Matthew makes explicit what the other two Synoptic Gospels imply about Jesus' exorcisms: Jesus performs his Satan-plundering ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit. This claim about the Spirit's role in Jesus' life and ministry is consistent with the entire presentation of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels and, indeed, in the rest of the New Testament. Jesus was conceived by the Spirit, descended upon by the Spirit at his baptism, led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested, anointed by the Spirit to preach

[61]Note that kenoticism seems to require an abandonment of divine immutability, impassibility, and simplicity. If a divine person can give up certain attributes in order to become incarnate, then he must be capable of change, susceptible to passions, and composed of separable parts.

good news to the poor, empowered by the Spirit to offer himself without blemish to God, and raised from the dead by the agency of the Spirit. Furthermore, this New Testament "Spirit Christology"[62] is consistent with the Old Testament hope for a Spirit-anointed Messiah and a Spirit-empowered Prophet. In short, it is impossible to understand the biblical portrait of Christ without accounting for the Holy Spirit's role in his identity and mission.

Gerald Hawthorne's *The Presence and the Power* provides what is perhaps the most comprehensive treatment of this biblical theme in recent decades.[63] Hawthorne traces the Spirit's influence through each of the major phases of Jesus' life and ministry from his conception to his resurrection from the dead. But Hawthorne does more than exegesis in this volume; he also seeks to draw Christological conclusions from the biblical data. Adopting a kind of functional kenoticism,[64] Hawthorne maintains that Christ chose not to exercise certain divine attributes during his earthly ministry. Instead, he lived his life solely through his humanity and was, therefore, entirely dependent upon the Holy Spirit.

> The Spirit so fully motivated Jesus' speech and actions that the miracles he performed and the words he spoke he spoke and performed, not by virture [*sic*] of

---

[62]"Spirit Christology" is being used here to denote one aspect of the Bible's presentation of Jesus, namely, that Christ is the Spirit-anointed Messiah. In other places, the term will be used to describe a particular approach to Christology that sees the Holy Spirit as the only or the predominant means by which Jesus lived his life and executed his earthly ministry. The context should indicate which meaning is intended. Both of these uses of "Spirit Christology" are to be distinguished from the ancient viewpoint that saw Jesus as the incarnation of the Holy Spirit. Regarding ancient Spirit Christology, see Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, rev. ed., trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox, 1964), 198-200.

[63]Gerald Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus* (Dallas: Word, 1991).

[64]I am employing Oliver Crisp's distinction between ontological and functional kenoticism. According to the former, Christ actually surrendered certain divine attributes in order to become incarnate. According to the latter, Christ merely gave up the exercise of certain attributes in order live a truly human life. See Oliver D. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 119. When Hawthorne writes that the incarnate Christ is "*fully* God, God undiminished by emptying himself of even a single attribute," it is clear that his view falls into the functional kenoticism category. Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 207.

> his own power, the power of his own divine personality, but by virtue of the power of the Holy Sprit at work within him and through him.[65]

Hawthorne's view seems to assume that the exercise of Christ's own intrinsic divine authority and his dependence upon the Holy Spirit are mutually exclusive states of affairs. Thus, for Hawthorne, the traditional portrait of Jesus (one in which he was constantly exercising his own divine prerogatives) is in need of serious revision.

For Hawthorne, the New Testament's Spirit Christology entails a rejection of the traditional dyothelite position. As with its ontological kenotic cousin, Hawthorne's functional kenoticism maintains that dyothelitism fails to account for the genuine limitations that the Son places upon himself in the Incarnation. He argues that the two-wills view tends to "hypostasize" the two natures of Christ and, therefore, comes dangerously close to the Nestorian heresy. In place of dyothelitism, Hawthorne suggests, following kenoticist Vincent Taylor, that the divine will of the Son functions in place of a human will.[66] Thus, Hawthorne's Christology seems to espouse a kind of volitional Apollinarianism.

Garrett DeWeese's proposal. In the years since the publication of *The Presence and the Power*, several evangelical theologians and philosophers have become convinced of Hawthorne's proposal. The biblical case is impressive. Few will deny the Spirit's prominent role in Jesus' conception, baptism, ministry, death, and resurrection. The question, then, is whether or not this strand of biblical Christology can support the metaphysical weight placed upon it by the conclusions of Hawthorne and others.

Garrett DeWeese has proposed what is perhaps the most thoroughgoing philosophical defense of the Spirit Christology approach to date. DeWeese argues that

---

[65]Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 145-46.

[66]Ibid., 212-13.

the two-wills view threatens to diminish "Christ's exemplary role as a perfect man."[67] Christ was the model, Spirit-empowered man. If he had recourse to a divine will and a divine mind, then he could hardly serve as an adequate example for those who do not have these resources.[68] According to DeWeese, the question is whether the will belongs to a person or to a nature. For DeWeese and other monothelites, "willing belongs to the self or personal center" of an individual, not to the nature (or nature*s* in the case of Christ) of an individual.[69] To put it in different terms, we might say that the will is *personal* (belonging to persons) not *natural* (belonging to natures). So, the scriptural teaching on the Spirit's role in Jesus' life, along with these other philosophical considerations, has led Dewisee and others away from the traditional dyothelite view.[70]

According to DeWeese, the dyothelite model suffers from four main weaknesses. First, dyothelitism seems "rather ad hoc."[71] The medieval manifestation of dyothelitism had argued that the human nature of Christ was a substance (in the Aristotlean sense), but that unlike all other substances, this substance was prevented from becoming a distinct *suppositum* (a self-existing individual or person) by virtue of the hypostatic union. According to DeWeese, this distinction seems ad hoc, utilized to fit a particular philosophical system, not necessarily the biblical portrait of the incarnation.

---

[67]Garrett J. DeWeese, "One Person, Two Natures: Two Metaphysical Models of the Incarnation," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 133.

[68]For a fuller defense of this argument, see Klaus Issler, "Jesus' Example: Prototype of the Dependent, Spirit-Filled Life," in *Jesus and Trinitarian Perspective*, 189-225.

[69]DeWeese, "One Person, Two Natures," 132.

[70]Marilyn McCord Adams has argued that medieval conclusions about the *nature* of Christ's human nature were motivated by systematic (i.e., related to certain theological systems, such as Anselmianism), soteriological, and biblical considerations. It would be a helpful exercise to apply these criteria to both sides in the monothelite debate as well. Marilyn McCord Adams, *What Sort of Human Nature?Medieval Philosophy and the Systematics of Christology* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1999).

[71]DeWeese, "One Person, Two Natures," 127.

Second, the dyothelite model struggles to specify just what it is that prevents Christ's human nature from becoming a separate person. Some, like Duns Scotus, have appealed to the miracle of the incarnation to explain this unique situation, but DeWeese does not seem satisfied with such a move.[72]

Third, dyothelitism seems to imply that, since the Son assumed a concrete human nature, he could have assumed any human nature whatsoever. In other words, he assumed his particular human nature contingently. Dewisee explores the "unsavory possibilities" that arise from this contingent assumption view, including the rather odd (and frankly Nestorian) suggestion of Millard Erickson that the Son could "decouple" himself from his human nature given certain circumstances. Finally, DeWeese faults dyothelitism with coming too close to the heresy of Nestorianism. This objection seems to be the main motivation for all monothelite Christologies. Again, for DeWeese and most other monothelites, the question turns on where one places the will, so to speak. "The issue, though, is this: does a consciousness or a mind or a will belong to a person or to a nature?" DeWeese's answer is clear: "Willing belongs to the self or personal center, and although Chalcecon spoke of two natures, it acknowledged one person, and therefore a unity of willing."[73]

In place of the traditional dyothelite model, DeWeese seeks to develop a contemporary, metaphysical model of the incarnation from a monothelite perspective. He defines "person" as "an individual with an appropriately complex and structured set of mental properties, faculties (a natural grouping of capacities) and higher order capacities, unified by internal relations."[74] A person, then, possesses consciousness, self-consciousness, and relationality. These properties inhere in persons, not natures. A

---

[72]Ibid., 128.

[73]Ibid., 132.

[74]Ibid., 138.

"nature," on the other hand, is a "complex property that includes all properties essential to an individual's being a member of a kind."[75] Thus, DeWeese's Spirit Christology is simply another subset of abstractist Christology, which he makes clear: "A nature is an abstract thing, and must be instantiated in, exemplified by, or 'had' by a particular."[76] What individuates a rational being is the person, then, not the nature.

DeWeese is convinced that this departure from the traditional dyothelite view is necessary in order to preserve Christ's full humanity without succumbing to the Nestorian tendencies of dyothelitism. Ironically, DeWeese believes that, in the dyothelite model, Christ's human will threatens "to disappear," being overshadowed by the divine will.[77] Christ's humanity must not be swallowed up by his deity, if he is to remain a genuine moral example for humanity. At the same time, Dewisee, in an effort to preserve the full deity of the Son, seems to think that something like the *extra Calvinisticum* still obtains. Like Moreland and Craig, DeWeese believes that the incarnate Son operates in a divine way via his "subliminal knowledge." Somehow the one mind and will of the Son possesses both divine and human properties.

Spirit Christologies: Conclusion. These evangelical Spirit Christologies pose a serious challenge to the traditional dyothelite position precisely because the biblical evidence for the Spirit's role in Jesus' life and ministry is so compelling. But the Christological question is whether or not this strand of biblical teaching can support the conclusions these Spirit Christologians draw from it. Even if it is granted that Jesus is, in some sense, dependent upon the Holy Spirit's empowering for the execution of his ministry, does this concession necessarily demand a denial of the *extra Calvinisticum*,

---

[75]Ibid., 141.

[76]Ibid., 142.

[77]Ibid., 133. This charge is ironic because DeWeese's model entails that there is no properly human will to be absorbed by the divine will. There is only the will of the divine Son.

with its implicit affirmation of Christ's divine will functioning outside of his human limitations? Must Christ surrender his divine functions in order to serve as a legitimate moral example? Does the New Testament's Spirit Christology demand a denial of dyothelitism in the way that many of its proponents seem to think? It is as least unclear why an affirmation of the Bible's Spirit Christology would demand these monothelite conclusions. It seems that one could embrace Jesus' dependence upon the Spirit *in his human will*, while at the same time affirming his sovereign exercise of *the divine will* along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Indeed, one could argue that an affirmation of Spirit Christology, with its emphasis on the Son's real human limitations, *requires* the dyothelite view, *if one is to avoid a more full-throated ontological kenoticism*. Only if Christ possesses two wills can he experience temptation, weakness, and ignorance while at the same time remaining fully God.

The Spirit Christology proposal raises a further theological issue that bears upon the monothelite debate, namely, the unity of Trinitarian operations. Traditionally, Christian theologians have maintained that all three persons of the Trinity are involved in all of God's external operations. Without denying that certain acts terminate on certain members of the Godhead (the so-called doctrine of appropriation), the tradition has maintained that none of the divine persons ever act alone. When God acts outside of himself, he acts as the Triune God. The Spirit Christology of Hawthorne and Dewisee seems to deny or at least modify this traditional understanding. In the functional kenoticism of these authors, the Son *turns off*, so to speak, his divine attributes and makes himself dependent upon the Holy Spirit for power. To be sure, the Son is active in his miracles, but only in his humanity. He has voluntarily given up the independent exercise of his divinity and has chosen instead to live in dependence upon the Father and Spirit. But this way of framing Jesus' activity does not seem consistent with the unity of Trinitarian operations. When Jesus heals a leper, for example, are only the Father and the

Spirit divinely active in the miracle? Is the Son merely a human conduit for the healing, functioning in basically the same way as the prophets of old, who performed great signs? The Gospels seem to present Jesus' agency in the miracles in a much more divine way than this interpretation suggests.[78] So, in addition to raising many of the same issues as the previous two categories of monothelitism (a redefinition of person and nature and a denial or redefinition of the *extra Calvinisticum*), Spirit Christology's functional kenoticism brings into sharper focus the Trinitarian implications of the monothelite position.

The Challenges Contemporary Monothelitism Faces

The challenges posed by contemporary monothelitism are substantial. These various one-will Christologies present an alternative vision of the incarnation that the traditional dyothelite model must address biblically, theologically, and philosophically. On the other hand, these monothelite approaches are not without their own challenges. Indeed, contemporary monothelitism faces serious difficulties on several different fronts. The thesis of this dissertation is that this recent monothelite revival, on balance, is a step in the wrong direction; it offers a less satisfying account of the incarnation than the traditional view. This section will briefly sketch out the main challenges that contemporary monothelitism faces. These issues will be developed further in subsequent chapters, especially as we explore how dyothelitism has taken shape in Reformed Christology.

The Historical Challenge

The most immediate and obvious challenge that contemporary monothelitism faces is its disagreement with the pronouncements of an ecumenical council of the

[78]See especially Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel:* God Crucified *and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

church. The Third Council of Constantinople, which is generally recognized as the church's Sixth Ecumenical Council, convened from 680-81 in order to offer an official response to the seventh century monothelite controversy. The text that emerged from the council unequivocally denounced the one-will Christology of the monothelites:

> We also proclaim two natural willings or will in him and two natural operations, without separation, without change, without partition, without confusion, according to the teaching of the holy Fathers—and two natural wills not contrary [to each other], God forbid, as the impious heretics have said [they would be], but his human will following, and not resisting or opposing, but rather subject to his divine and all-powerful will.[79]

Chapter 3 will explore further the events leading up to Constantinople III, but for now it is sufficient to note that the council intentionally cast the will/operation question in the language of Chalcedon. Chalcedon's four privatives (without separation, without change, without partition and without confusion), which had been applied to the hypostatic union of Christ's two natures, are here applied to his two wills and two operations. The divine and human wills of Christ are to be distinguished but not separated; they find their unity in the singular hypostasis of the Son.

It is also important to note that the council determined in its very first session to consider its pronouncements ecumenical. The church in both the East and the West has subsequently received it as such. For example, consider the following statements made by representative theologians from Eastern Orthodoxy (John of Damascus), Roman Catholicism (Thomas Aquinas), and Protestantism (John Calvin):

> We . . . declare that corresponding to His two natures He has the twofold set of properties belonging to the two natures—two natural wills, the divine and the human. . . . For since He is consubstantial with God the Father, He freely wills and acts as God. And, since He is also consubstantial with us, the same one freely wills and acts as man. Thus, the miracles are His, and so are the sufferings.[80]

---

[79]"The Statement of Faith of the Third Council of Constantinople (Sixth Ecumenical)," in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward R. Hardy (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1954), 383.

[80]John of Damascus, *Writings*, 297. See also the discussion in Andrew Louth, *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 166-72.

> The power of the will is natural, and necessarily follows upon the nature . . . Hence besides the Divine will it is necessary to place in Christ a human will.[81]
>
> This passage (the Gethsemane Narrative) shows plainly enough the gross folly of those ancient heretics, who were called *Monothelites*, because they imagined that the will of Christ was but one and simple; for Christ, as he was God, *willed* nothing different from the Father; and therefore, it follows, that his human soul had affections distinct from the secret purpose of God.[82]

Chapters 3-4 will provide a more substantial survey of this dyothelite position across the centuries of Christian thought. The main point is relatively uncontroversial: the accepted, orthodox position not only in the Eastern Church (where the monothelite controversy first raged) but also in the Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions is a two-willed Christology. Not until the rise of Protestant Liberalism and nineteenth century kenoticism was the church's dyothelite position seriously questioned.

But the question remains as to how much weight this historical evidence ought to be given by evangelical theologians, whose doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* requires that all creeds and councils be tested according to the ultimate authority of Scripture. Indeed, some evangelicals are quite explicit in rejecting the conciliar dyothelite position on precisely these biblical grounds. Garrett Dewisee, for example, says,

> Now, it certainly should give an Evangelical pause when a proposed theological model departs from positions endorsed by the seven ecumenical councils. But such a departure is not necessarily fatal . . . The point is this: while most Evangelicals should and do regard the deliverances of the ecumenical councils as weighty in defining the orthodox faith, they would agree that the councils cannot be accepted uncritically but must themselves be judged by the authority of Scripture.[83]

In one sense, DeWeese's point is well taken. In the portion of his text that is elided above, DeWeese cites two examples of common evangelical departures from (or at least reinterpretations of) particular conciliar pronouncements: the statement of Nicaea I on baptism "for the remission of sins" (which at the time would have carried regenerative

---

[81]Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 3.18.1.

[82] John Calvin, *A Commentary on A Harmony of the Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, trans. William Pringle, in *Calvin's Commentaries*, 22 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 3:233.

[83]DeWeese, "One Person, Two Natures," 148.

connotations) and the affirmation of icon veneration at Nicaea II. The evangelical view of *Sola Scriptura* demands an evaluation of all conciliar decisions in the light of Scripture. But this principle, considered alone, begs the question with regard to the biblical evidence. Does the biblical presentation of Christ point in a monothelite direction or the more traditional dyothelite direction?

But DeWeese's biblicist objection to the conciliar position raises a further methodological question: what is the function and authority of the ecumenical councils in evangelical theological method? The position of this dissertation is that the seven ecumenical councils ought to be afforded a significant measure of deference both hermeneutically and theologically. This position is based on two important Christian doctrines: the doctrine of divine providence and the doctrine of illumination. God, by the Holy Spirit's work of illumination, has providentially guided the church—especially in its early centuries and especially with regard to matters intimately related to the Christian gospel—in such a way that the ecumenical councils spoke with biblical and theological clarity (but not infallibility) on these first order issues. So, while Scripture may correct or even refute a pronouncement of an ecumenical council, nevertheless, these seven councils have had such a significant place in the history of the church that they ought be considered the default position, so speak, for contemporary Christian theologians and interpreters.[84] So, if it is not clear that the two-wills position is forbidden by Scripture, then it is reasonable for Christian theologians to show deference to the findings of the Sixth Ecumenical Council on this matter. Furthermore, this position is sensible even for evangelical Protestants, since neither Reformation Christology nor post-Reformation

[84]For a excellent discussion of how evangelicals can embrace the ancient creeds of the church, see Thomas C. Oden, "Nicea and Evangelical Confession," in *Evangelicals and the Nicene Faith: Reclaiming the Apostolic Witness*, ed. Timothy George (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 3-19. Oden argues that the councils' authority is grounded in "general lay consent" and that this consensus often takes centuries to discern.

orthodoxy overturned the church's dyothelite consensus.[85] In short, the burden of proof lies with those who wish to overturn an ecumenical council, and this burden ought to be significantly high. Oliver Crisp is surely correct when he writes, "It seems to me that someone dissenting from the findings of an ecumenical council of the Church should have a very good reason—indeed, a very good *theological* reason—for doing so."[86]

The Biblical Challenge

Kenoticist Hugh Ross Mackintosh has claimed, "We cannot predicate of [Christ] two consciousnesses or two wills; the New Testament indicates nothing of the kind."[87] But can the biblical evidence cited in favor of the dyothelite position be so easily dismissed? Other interpreters are not so certain that the Scriptures are silent on the duality of Christ's volition. Recently, theologian Ivor Davidson has argued,

> Contrary to the extraordinary comment of H. R. Mackintosh that the Christian scriptures know nothing of the possibility of two wills in Christ, there is in fact much reason to grapple with the reality that the incarnate one is to be assigned two distinguishable centres of willing.[88]

Davidson points to the most obvious passage: "The *locus classicus* is of course the synoptic gospels' portrayal of Jesus' agony in the garden." Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane seems to be a straightforward affirmation that his will is distinct from the will of the Father: "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done" (Luke 22:42; cf. Matt 26:39, 42; Mark 14:36). Davidson concludes from this passage, "Such language seems clearly to imply that the will of the God to

---

[85]Indeed, as will be argued in the subsequent chapters, the two-wills position is of a piece with the Reformed understanding of the person of Christ—one who is God undiminished even after the incarnation, as the extra Calvinisticum affirms, but one who has also assumed all that it means to be human as a prerequisite for his role as our federal representative.

[86]Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, 35 (emphasis original).

[87]Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, 470.

[88]Ivor J. Davidson, " 'Not My Will but Yours Be Done': The Ontological Dynamics of Incarnational Intention," *IJST* 7, no. 2 (April 2005): 181.

whom Jesus prays is distinct from his own will as the praying subject—indeed not only distinct from it, but potentially even in some tension with it."[89]

Some in the monothelite camp have argued that this distinction of wills simply points to the personal distinction between the Father and the Son. Jesus' words here "do not contemplate a struggle of Jesus' human will with his divine will (he is not, after all, talking to himself!), but have reference to the interaction between Jesus' will ("my will") and the Father's will ("yours")."[90] This interpretation assumes that wills belong to persons and, therefore, concludes the Son and the Father, as distinct divine persons, possess distinct wills. So, it seems that one implication of a monothelite interpretation of the Gethsemane narrative is some kind of social trinitarianism, in which the three persons of the Godhead are conceived of as distinct centers of volition. The biblical and theological discussion in chapter 5 will seek to adjudicate these Christological and Trinitarian positions regarding Jesus' Gethsemane prayer. But assuming a single divine will, which is shared by all three Divine Persons, this passage would seem to teach rather straightforwardly that the incarnate Son possesses a distinct human will that can be (and, indeed, was) in tension with but not finally contradictory to the divine will.

In addition to the Gethsemane Narrative, there are several other places in the New Testament that speak to the *willing* of the incarnate Christ. In John's gospel, Jesus makes several remarkable claims about his incarnational mission vis-à-vis his will and the will of the Father:

> Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work (John 4:34)
>
> "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me" (John 5:30).
>
> "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who

---

[89]Ibid.

[90]Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*, 611.

sent me" (John 6:38).

In these passages, Jesus either implicitly or explicitly makes a distinction between his own will and the will of his Father. Once again, how one interprets this distinction is dependent, in large measure, upon how one approaches the volitional life of the Trinity. If one adopts a social trinitarian position, then these passages can be interpreted as simply distinguishing between the personal wills of two members of the Godhead. But if one assumes a numerically singular divine will, then these passages would seem to provide further biblical evidence for the two wills position.[91]

Additionally, there are some New Testament Christological themes that have implications for the debate over Christ's will(s). For example, Christ is presented in the New Testament as the Last Adam: the one who, like the first man, covenantally represents his people in such a way that his actions affect their destinies. It may not be immediately apparent how this Adam Christology bears upon the question of Christ's will(s), but as we will see in our discussion of the dyothelite tradition, the Adamic work of Christ seems to require some human volitional equipage for its salvific efficacy. The same logic equally applies the Reformed emphasis on Christ's active obedience: only if Christ possesses a human will can he render obedience to God in the place of sinful human wills. Another Christological theme that bears upon the monothelite debate is the *extra Calvinisticum*. As noted above, monothelite proposals either have difficulty affirming this doctrine or else revise it so that it fist with a more kenotic approach to Christ's knowledge and power.

In addition to this positive case for dyothelitsm, contemporary dyothelites must

---

[91]Nevertheless, matters are a bit more complicated with John 5:30. Here, Jesus seems to push the distinction of wills back behind the incarnation into eternity: "I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me." This verse seems to be saying that the *preexistent* Son chose to become incarnate as an act of his own will, which is distinct from the Father's—the one who sent him. If this is the case, then it would seem to give credence to the social trinitarian insistence that there are three wills in the immanent Trinity. But this conclusion is not required, even if we understand this verse to be describing a pre-incarnate decision of the Son's will. Chapter 3 will examine how Gregory of Nazianzus interpreted this passage and chapter 5 will have more to say about these Johannine passages.

also respond to the best biblical arguments in favor of the monothelite position. This means that a contemporary defense of dyothelitsm would need to answer the biblical case for Spirit Christology and kenotic Christology. Chapter 5 below will suggest an alternative explanation of the key passages involved in these debates: the various passages that speak of the Spirit's role in Christ's life and the chief kenotic proof-text, Philippians 2.

The Theological Challenge

Several dogmatic loci are also implicated in the monothelite debate. First, and most obvious, the monothelite debate affects one's general approach to Christology. Chapter 5 will explore several Christological issues that are particularly challenging for contemporary monothelitism: determining the nature of Christ's human nature, properly defining the principle Chalcedonian terms (person and nature) and affirming a robust version of the *extra Calvinisticum*.[92]

Chapter 5 will also examine monothelite challenges on two other dogmatic fronts: the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of salvation. As noted above, these two theological topics have been a part of the monothelite controversy from the very beginning. Dyothelites have long noted the Trinitarian implications of the monothelite position: if wills belong to persons and there are three wills in the Godhead, then God must be a trithelitic being. Thus, monothelitism seems to bear the burden of

---

[92]With regard to the Chalcedonian terms, dyothelitism defines nature such that it includes the will. As far back as Maximus the Confessor, dyothelitism has positioned itself as the rightful heir of the Chalcedonian tradition. In other words, proponents of dyothelitism have understood their position to be a necessary consequence of Chalcedon's Definition: two distinct natures require two distinct wills. So Barthellos on Maximus: "The teaching of Maximus on the two wills of Jesus Christ cannot be fully understood without reference to his understanding of the notions 'person'/'hypostasis' and 'nature'/'essence' in Christology, and vice versa. Actually, the way in which Maximus conceived these notions as well as the way in which he employed them in order to denote unity and distinction in Christology, form the necessary theological background against which his theology of the wills finds its place, and against which it can be properly understood." Demetrios Barthellos, *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 99.

demonstrating how it does not collapse into some form of tri-theism, or at lest a more problematic form of social Trinitarianism. Further, some forms of monothelitism, especially those that are more explicitly kenotic, can have difficulty affirming the unity of Trinitarian operations. If the Son limits himself to his humanity in the incarnation, then in what meaningful sense can the three persons be acting in concert in his miracles? It would seem that the Son's deity is "turned off," so to speak, leaving it to the Father and Spirit to pick up the slack.

On the soteriological front, dyothelitism has always had the Gregorian high-ground, so to speak; that is, dyothelitism has often appealed to the maxim of Gregory Nazianzen: "That which is unassumed is unhealed." If the Son has not assumed a human will, then that part of our humanity is left to languish in its fallen state. Of course, the validity of this argument depends upon how one defines the key Chalcedonian terms. If wills belong to persons, then there is no discrete "human will" in any human nature. Therefore, no Chalcedonian principle would be breached if the Son brings his own personal will to the party, as it were. We might say that his human nature is *anthelemic* (without a will) when viewed in abstraction from the incarnation, but it is *enthelemic* (given its will) by virtue of the incarnation. Nevertheless, the representational/ substitutionary impulse of the Gregorian maxim still has force, provided one defines the Chalcedonian terms in a Constantinopolitan manner (that is, in accord with Constantinople III and the dyothelite tradition that came in its wake). In short, the theological case for dyothelitism is cumulative and requires the consideration of several biblical and theological factors at once. The same can be said for monothelitism. The decisions to be made in this debate are multi-faceted, which is why a full, dogmatic response is needed in order to address this issue. The chapters that follow will attempt such a dogmatic defense of the dyothelite position.

CHAPTER 3
RETRIEVING DYOTHELITISM I: THE PATRISTIC AND MEDIEVAL CONSENSUS

Introduction

The previous chapter concluded by noting some of the challenges that contemporary monothelitism faces. We pointed out that perhaps the most pressing of these challenges is *conciliar*; that is, an ecumenical council of the church has spoken to the issue and has found in favor of the dyothelite position. This challenge is intensified for monothelites by the fact that dyothelitism has subsequently been accepted as the orthodox position in all three branches of Christian theology: Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. In other words, the Sixth Ecumenical Council appears to have lived up to its title: historically, Constantinople III has been truly *ecumenical*. Until the rise of Protestant Liberalism and then, in more conservative circles, kenotic Christology, the dyothelite position was relatively uncontroversial. It was assumed that Constantinople III's two-wills doctrine was the natural corollary of Chalcedon's two-natures doctrine.

Retelling the story that led to this two-wills consensus is an important step in presenting a full-orbed, contemporary defense of the dyothelite position. What seems to be needed in the contemporary moment is a theological retrieval of this dyothelite tradition and the biblical and theological rationale underneath it.[1] This chapter and the

[1]On "retrieval theology," see John Webster, "Theologies of Retrieval," in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 583-99. See also Oliver Crisp, *Retrieving Doctrine: Essays in Reformed Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011).

next attempt such a retrieval, pressing the theological reflections of the past into the service of contemporary dogmatics—or, to state the matter in less coercive terms, entering into a collegial dialogue with the past in such a way that we are enabled to speak more clearly to the theological discussions of the present.

The present chapter surveys the history of the dyothelite consensus that emerged from the Patristic era and continued into the medieval era. Three distinct periods will be examined: the pre-Constantinople III Patristic era (in which there were precursors to the later monothelite controversy), the monothelite controversy proper (that is, the seventh century debates leading up to and including Constantinople III), and the subsequent medieval tradition (manifested in both the East and the West).

In the next chapter, our historical survey will take us into the Reformation and post-Reformation eras and will venture all the way into the twentieth century. Particular attention will be paid to several key theologians in the Reformed tradition. We will examine how John Calvin, John Gill, William G. T. Shedd, and T. F. Torrance each defended the orthodox dyothelite position within the context of their own distinctive approaches to Reformed Christology.

The historical method employed here is representative in nature; that is, representative theologians have been selected both for their prominence in the Christian tradition and for their articulation of the mainstream, orthodox dyothelite position.[2] In one sense, there is little controversy concerning the dyothelite consensus during these eras. There is little benefit in belaboring a historically settled fact, namely, that dyothelitism is the majority position in church history. Instead, the benefit of this historical survey is to be found in its unearthing of the biblical and theological argumentation of the dyothelites. By seeking to understand the biblical-theological logic

[2]However, as we will see, the motivation for some of these dyothelite approaches can be rather idiosyncratic. For example, Shedd's defense is tied to his Augustinian realism, and Torrances's approach is motivated in part by his position on the fallenness of Christ's human nature.

of the dyothelite past, we will be better equipped to evaluate the monothelite challenges of the present.

The Question of Christ's Will(s) before Constantinople III

Early Monothelitisms/Monoenergisms

Discussions of the history of monothelitism typically focus attention on the seventh century controversy that culminated in the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 680-81.[3] But as Cyril Hovorun has shown in his important work, *Will, Action and Freedom: Christological Controversies in the Seventh Century*, there were several significant precursors to this seventh century debate. Indeed, Hovorun identifies four forms of pre-Constantinople III monothelitism/monoenergism: the monophysite Christology of Apollinaris, the "Antiochene" Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the anti-Chalcedonian Christology of Severus of Antioch (among others), and certain strands of neo-Chalcedonian Christology related to the *theopaschism* controversy. Hovorun's categories and insightful analysis will guide our discussion of these early manifestions of monothelitism.

Apollinarian monothelitism. Apollinaris (d. ca. 392) is most well-known for his insistence that the humanity of Christ was lacking a spirit (πνεῦμα) or mind (νοῦς) and that the person of the Logos took the place of this missing component in the incarnation.[4]

---

[3]On the history of monothelitism, see, Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine 2, The Spirit of Eastern Christendom* (600-1700) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 62-75; Leo Donald Davis, S.J., *The First Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History Theology* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazer, 1987), 258-89); Paul Verghese, "The Monothelite Controversy—A Historical Survey," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 13 (1968): 196-208; Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, vol. 2, *From Augustine to the Eve of the Reformation*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 88-91, 98-100; Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 186-92.

[4]For an account of Apollinaris's Christology, see Aloys Grillmeier, S.J., *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 329-43.

The humanity of Christ consisted of a body and an animal soul (ψυχή), but it lacked the higher part of humanity, namely, the spirit/mind. Apollinaris's burden was to avoid any notion of adoptionism, the idea that the Logos simply came to indwell an already-existing human person. Instead, Apollinaris argued that Christ has one nature (μία φύσις), which is composed of the divine Logos and the human body[5] that is animated by him. These two components of the incarnate Christ cannot be separated and, indeed, cannot even be distinguished as discrete natures:

> The created body does not live in separation from the uncreated Godhead, so that one could distinguish a created *physis*, and the uncreated Logos does not dwell in the world in separation from the body, so that one could distinguish the *physis* of the uncreated.[6]

In other words, there is such a strong unity between the Logos and his body that the two become one *physis* and can no longer be considered two *physoi*. Still, the divine part possesses a dynamic priority over the human part. The Logos animates and the body is animated. Nevertheless, these two parts cannot finally be distinguished as distinct *physoi*. In short, for Apollinaris, the incarnate Christ has one nature with two unequal parts: the animating divine Logos and the animated human body.[7]

According to Apollinaris's logic, this monophysitism entails both monoenergism and monothelitism. The divine Logos indwells the flesh "according to the activity (κατὰ τὸ παθητικόν)" so that the incarnate Christ "was a single being composed of what is moved and what moves."[8] Since the Logos has dynamic priority in this composition, it is he who provides the *energeia* to the union: "the Logos with his divine

---

[5]Here and in the following discussion of Apollinarianism, I am using "body" as a synecdoche for the Apollinarian understanding of Christ's human nature, namely, a body/animal soul complex.

[6]Cited in Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition,* 1:334.

[7]Cyril Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom: Christological Controversies in the Seventh Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 6.

[8]Cited in Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom*, 7.

perfection contributes a natural activity to the whole."[9] Indeed, the actions of Christ's body cannot rightly be considered *energeia* at all but are instead merely the human "movements" of the Logos. This accounting of the singular *energeia* of Christ becomes important for Apollinaris's entire Christological project, as Hovorun explains:

> Thus, the *energeia* of the flesh, in comparison with the activity of the Godhead, is not *energeia*, but a passive movement initiated by the divinity. This becomes clearer when a general Apollinarian perception of the unity of Christ is taken into consideration. According to this understanding, the unity is not static, but dynamic and lively (ἑνότης ζωτική). Christ is one because he has one life and one power, which proceeds from the Godhead and imbues humanity. Apollinaris equates this life of Christ with the *energeia*, which, it follows, is not simply an activity, but also a life-giving power of Godhead. In this way, Christ's human actions cannot be termed *energeiai*, but merely "movements." Apollinaris went further and asserted that the *energeia* of the Logos substituted his human soul and mind. Hence, the concept of *energeia* became crucial for Apollinaris's entire system.[10]

Apollinaris's brand of monophysitism also had implications for his understanding Christ's will. He makes this point explicitly: "For this reason, we confess a single Christ; and because he is single, we worship his single nature, will, and energeia, which is preserved equally in the miracles and the passions."[11] So whether we have in view Christ's deity (the miracles) or his humanity (the passions), there is a single will operative in both. Otherwise, according to Apollinaris, the unity of Christ's person would be threatened. His argument assumes a close connection between the *thelēma* and the *nous*, the will and the mind, as Hovorun notes:

> The *nous* has absolute control over the volitional capacities. It is the sole subject of willing. The will and its subject are so closely linked to each other that nothing separates them. Two wills would introduce two subjects of willing, which of necessity would be opposed to each other.[12]

In Apollinaris's own words, "[I]t is impossible for two (subjects) who will what is opposite to one another . . . to coexist in one and the same subject; for each would do

---

[9]Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom*, 7.

[10]Ibid., 8.

[11]Ibid., 9.

[12]Ibid.

what is desirable to it, according to a self-moved impulse."[13]

What is so remarkable about Apollinaris's argumentation is that its logic has been preserved in virtually every manifestation of monothelitism since, including its more recent iterations. In the seventh century debate, Phyrrus, who was one of Maximus's chief monothelite opponents, repeats some of the same concerns as Apollinaris with regard to the impossibility of two wills in a single subject.[14] Similarly, one can hear echoes of Apollinaris in the critiques of dyothelitism offered by Schleiermacher: "If Christ has two wills, then the unity of his person is no more than apparent."[15] Kenotic monothelites, such as Forsyth and Mackintosh, likewise think that a dual-willed person is a contradiction in terms:

> There could not be two wills, or two consciousnesses, in the same personality, by any psychological possibility now credible. We could not have in the same person both knowledge and ignorance of the same thing.[16]
>
> We cannot predicate of Him two consciousnesses or two wills; the New Testament indicates nothing of the kind, nor indeed is it congruous with an intelligible psychology.[17]

In sum, an *a priori* rejection of the possibility of two hypostatically-united wills is not novel. It has roots in the monophysite Christology of Apollinaris, even if the ancient Laodicean went further than many contemporary monothelites are willing to venture.[18]

---

[13]Ibid.

[14]The Maximus-Pyrrhus debate will be discussed in more detail below.

[15]Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. Hugh R. Mackintosh (London: T&T Clark, 1999), 394.

[16]P. T. Forsyth, *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ* (Boston: Pilgrim, 1909), 319.

[17]H. R. Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1912), 470.

[18]It should be noted, however, that at least two contemporary evangelical monothelites have attempted to rehabilitate Apollinaris's Christology, with some important revisions. See William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 609.

Theodorean monothelitism. Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350-428) represents a Christological approach on the opposite pole from Apollinaris. As a representative of the so-called "Antiochene school,"—or, more accurately, the Logos-Anthropos approach to Christology[19]—Theodore is jealous to defend the full humanity of Christ and a sharp distinction between his two natures.[20] Yet he is also noted for having emphasized "the unity of Christ's natures as occurring in one prosōpon (person)."[21] Since, for Theodore, the will properly belongs to the person, Christ possesses a singular will. Thus, somewhat surprisingly, Theodore arrives at monothelite conclusions no weaker than his Apollinarian opponents, though with some significant variation.

In this polemical works against Apollinarianism, Theodore is concerned to defend the full humanity of Christ. As a result, he makes a strong case for the "fullness of the human faculties in Christ, including his human activities and wills."[22] Theodore attributes to both natures the capacity to will and to act, but the two natures always work in concert. As a human, Christ "held fast to [God's] way by his own will, while on the other hand this choice was made secure in him by the co-operating work of God the Word."[23] Note that in this passage Theodore makes a distinction between Christ and

---

[19]Patristic Christology is sometimes separated into two camps, denominated by their respective geographical hubs: Alexandrian Christology (emphasizing divinity and unity) and Antiochene Christology (emphasizing humanity and distinction). In his excellent study of early Christology, Aloys Grillmeier structures his work around a different typology, namely, two emphases that cut across geographical lines: *Logos-Sarx* (Word-Flesh) Christologies and *Logos-Anthropos* (Word-Man) Christologies, with the latter emphasizing more consistently the Word's assumption of a complete human nature, including a human soul. See Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1.

[20]So much so that Theodore has often been associated with the heretical position of his younger contemporary, Nestorius. However, Theodore scholars are divided on the validity of this Nestorian charge. For the literature on this issue, see Frederick McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia* (London: Routledge, 2009), 12.

[21]McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 3.

[22]Hovorun, *Will, Action, and Freedom*, 11.

[23]Theodore of Mopsuestia, *On the Incarnation*, 7.3, cited in Hovorun, *Will, Action, and Freedom*, 11.

"God the Word." It almost seems that for Theodore, Christ and the Word are distinct agents who cooperate with one another. Language such as this has led many to believe that Theodore had Nestorian tendencies—that he posited two persons in the incarnate Christ.

But interestingly Theodore spoke of Christ's person as singular, and this singular person includes a singular i and a singular will. Hovorun cites Theodore at length on this issue:

> The idea of unity according to the essence (κατ' οὐσίαν) is true only if applied to (the beings) of the same essence, but it is wrong if applied to the (the beings) of different essences; otherwise it (=the idea) could not be free from confusion. At the same time, the way of unity according to benevolence while preserving natures unconfused and undivided, indicates a single person of both, as well as a single will and *energeia* which are followed by a single power and dominion.[24]

In this passage, Theodore is clearly opposes the monophysitism of Apollinaris. There can be no unity of natures when those natures belong to different essences. Rather, the unity in Christ is to be found in his person, and for Theodore the person includes the will. So, while the two natures of Christ, in some sense, possess the capacity to will, there is functionally one will in the incarnate Christ, which belongs properly to his person.

This tension in Theodore's thought finds its resolution in his understanding of one of the key Christological terms: *prosopon*. For Theodore, this term means something closer to its original meaning: "countenance" or "manifestation." Aloys Grillmeier explains:

> In Theodore, as also later in Nestorius and in Theodoret, before Chalcedon, the word *prosopon* should not simply be rendered "person," giving the word the strictly ontological content which it had later. *Prosopon* here should not be interpreted in the light of the definition of person in Boethius or Leontius of Byzantium. At this stage, we must also exclude the full Chalcedonian sense of *prosopon* derives from the original meaning of the word *prosopon*, "countenance." *Prosopon* is the "form in which a physis or hypostasis appears." Every nature and every hypostasis has its own proper *prosopon*. It gives expression to the reality of the nature with its powers

---

[24]Theodore of Mopsuestia, *On the Incarnation*, cited in Hovorun, *Will, Action, and Freedom*, 11.

and characteristics.[25]

But if each nature has a *prosopon* and Theodore has already established that the two natures in Christ form one *prosopon*, then are we left with three *prosopa* in the incarnate Christ? Grillmeier also addresses this question:

> But the authentic Theodore [as opposed to some specious texts attributed to him] always speaks only of one *prosopon* in two natures. Now this one prosopon is produced by the Logos giving his own *prosopon* to the "assumed man."[26]

Thus Theodore affirms something close to the later doctrine of enhypostasis, in which the Son gives personhood to the otherwise impersonal human nature of Christ. But we should not overstate this similarity, since, as Grillmeier makes clear, Theodore's *prosopon* cannot be simply equated with the later usage of the term (along with its virtual synonym in the later Fathers, *hypostasis*). For Theodore, while the two natures of Christ each possess the capacity to will, they are united in a single manifestation of willing in the single person of Christ.

Interestingly, Hovorun points out that Maximus would later use this Theodorean/Nestorian monothelitism as a weapon against his chief monothelite opponent, Pyrrhus. Knowing that Pyrrhus would not wish to be identified with the heretic Nestorius, Maximus claims that Pyrrhus's one will Christology is simply a repristination of the Nestorian position: "Why, then, do they reject Nestorius, yet firmly embrace his words and ideas?" Maximus goes so far as to say that "the doctrine of one will in two persons was invented by [Nestorius]."[27] Hovorun notes the obvious exaggeration in Maximus's words: Pyrrhus's one will Christology can hardly be equated with the more modest monothelitism of Nestorius and Theodore, who simply argued that Christ's two natures are manifested in one *prosopon*, or countenance. Nevertheless, it is

---

[25]Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 1:431. Also cited in Hovorun, *Will, Action, and Freedom*, 13.

[26]Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 1:432.

[27]Maximus the Confessor, *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, trans. Joseph P. Farrell (Waymart, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1990), 36.

worthy of note that heretics on both sides of the aisle, so to speak, reached similar monothelite conclusions. In one sense, it is more intuitive to see how monophysites such as Apollinaris arrived at the monothelite position. But it is interesting to see that Nestorians as well, seeking to affirm Christ's unity in some fashion, also wound up arguing for a one-will position. Part of the problem lies in the confusion on both sides with regard to the key Christological terms: person and nature. After Chalcedon, the terms would become more solidified among the orthodox, with person (*prosopon*/*hypostasis*) representing the individual subject who exists in the two natures (*ousia/physis*), which were seen as the centers of knowledge and volition. Constantinople III, then, should be seen as the natural outworking of this terminological clarification.

Severan monothelitism. As evidenced by the previous two subsections, early versions of monothelitism appeared in diverse contexts even before the rise of the monothelite controversy of the seventh century. Both monophysites, such as Apollinaris, and quasi-Nestorians, such as Theodore, could affirm remarkably similar positions on Christ's singular will, though they approached Christology from radically different vantage points. So our surprise should be somewhat mitigated when we discover that some branches of Cyrillian Christology arrived at monothelite conclusions very similar to those of Cyril's theological nemesis, Nestorius.

It should be even less of a shock to discover that the non-Chalcedonian streams of Cyrillian thought were especially susceptible to this monothelite position. Severus of Antioch (465-538) was perhaps the first and most significant of the Cyrillian, non-Chalcedonian monoenergists/monothelites. While "the notion of *energeia* as such was not the focal point of Severus' theology,"[28] his affirmation of a single *energeia* in Christ

[28]Hovorun, *Will, Action, and Freedom*, 16.

is quite explicit: "There is only one single activity, only one single operative motion."[29] Because Severus rejected Chalcedon's two-natures doctrine, he quite naturally rejected the notion that there were two *energeia* in Christ, which inhere in two natures. For Severus, the humanity of Christ was simply an *organon*, through which the Divine Son acts.[30] Therefore, there is and can only be one *energeia* in the Son.[31]

Though his discussion of the will of Christ is even less prominent than his treatment of the *energeia*, it seems clear that Severus affirmed a version of monothelitism as well. For Severus, the activity of Christ is "like an active movement and impetus of the will."[32] Thus, will and activity must be held together, and since Christ's activity is single, so too is his will. Severus could also speak of a duality in the will of Christ, but it was not a duality unique to Christ. For Severus, every human person possesses a dual will, in one sense; that is, they possess a will of the flesh and a will of the soul. When he applies this logic to the person of Christ, Severus seems content to speak of two wills in Christ: one divine and one human. Because Christ's single nature is derived from two natures—the divine and the human—"he also displays two wills in salvific suffering, the one which requests, the other which is prepared, the one human, the other divine." Both wills are necessary for salvation:

> As he voluntarily took upon himself death in the flesh, which was able to take over suffering and dissolved the domination of death by killing it through immortality—which the resurrection has shown clearly to all—so in the flesh, whose fruit he could take over—it was indeed rationally animated—he voluntarily took upon himself the *passio* of fear and weakness and uttered words of request, in order through the divine courage to destroy the power of that fear and to give courage to the whole of humanity, for he became after the first Adam the second beginning of

---

[29]Ibid., 16.

[30]Hovorun, *Will, Action, and Freedom*, 17-18.

[31]Severus found support for his views in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, especially the latter's famous attempt to hold the divine and human together in "a certain new theandric energy of God having become man." Hovorun argues that "Severus was the first theologian to interpret [this] phrase in a Monoenergist way." Hovorun, *Will, Action, and Freedom*, 19.

[32]Cited in Hovorun, *Will, Action, and Freedom*, 25.

our race.[33]

What is so interesting about this passage is that Severus's logic here is remarkably similar to the salvific arguments of the *dyothelites*. Through his human will, Christ must experience the "*passio* of fear"—even if it is overcome by the "courage" of the divine nature—because Christ must serve as the Last Adam, the head of a new humanity. Once again, this is remarkably similar to the dyothelite interpretation of the Gethsemane Narrative. Consider Irenaeus, for example: Christ's human sufferings, including his agony in Gethsemane, "are indications of the flesh that was taken from the earth, which He recapitulated in Himself, thus saving His handiwork."[34] Christ's sufferings were a necessary part of his recapitulating, Last-Adam work, and this work required some kind of human volitional equipage for its efficacy.

But the similarities should not be over-emphasized. We must keep in mind that, for Severus, the nature of Christ is single, even though it is made up of divinity and humanity. The same goes for the one *energeia* and the one will of Christ. Even if we can speak about some kind of duality in the will of Christ, it is nevertheless single, since the divine and human in Christ always work in concert. Still, there is enough ambiguity in Severus's treatment of Christ's will for Hovorun to conclude,

> [A] certain inconsistency may be observed in Serverus' conception of will. On the one hand, the will is one, and overwhelmingly divine. On the other hand, there are two wills, divine and human. Severus unfortunately did not provide any clue to enable us to resolve this contradiction convincingly.[35]

Those in the Cyrillian, anti-Chalcedonian camp who came after Severus took his views even further, to the point of eliminating this tension in his thought. These more radical versions of monoenergism would seem to be the inevitable consequence of Severus's monophysitism and his ambiguity on the distinctiveness of Christ's divinity and

---

[33]Ibid., 26.

[34]Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, 3 vols., trans. Dominic J. Unger (New York: Newman, 2012), 3.22.2.

[35]Hovorun, *Will, Action, and Freedom*, 28.

humanity.[36]

Theopaschist monoenergism. Hovorun's final category of early monoengergism/monothelitism comprises a group of sixth century Scythian monks who espoused a view known as theopaschism.[37] While it is not clear that these theologians and their followers explicitly affirmed the one-activity position (and they do not appear to have entertained the one-will question), their insistence upon the formula, "Christ, one of the Trinity became flesh and suffered," and the controversy that ensued over it would lay the ground work for the later monoenergist debate of the seventh century.

Since the theopaschite controversy did not explicitly touch upon the will(s) debate, our discussion of it can be brief. In the first half of the sixth century, several parties—including the Scythian monks mentioned above, Emperor Justinian, and Pope Hormisdas—wrestled with different versions of a formula that sought to articulate the unity of Christ's person. The Scythian monks believed that the phrase *Christus unus ex Trinitate incarnatus et passus* ("Christ, one of the Trinity became flesh and suffered") captured the unity of Christ in a more meaningful sense than Chalcedon had. Justinian was initially wary of the theopaschite formula but eventually came to see it as a possible bridge between the Chalcedonians and the anti-Chalcedonian Severans. Pope Hormisdas remained unconvinced, believing that the formula ran the risk of implying that the

---

[36]Hovorun discusses several versions of this anti-Chalcedonian approach after Severus: Julian of Halicarnassus, the Agnoetes, and their opponents (such as Theodosius of Alexandria, Anthimus of Trebizond, Constantine of Laodicea, and Sergius the Grammarian). Hovorun, *Will, Action, and Freedom*, 28-41.

[37]Among this group of monks were Maxentius, Achillius, John, Leontius, and Mauritius. Hovorun, *Will, Action, and Freedom*, 41. Stephen Holmes suggests that the problem with the Scythian monks' had less to do with theopaschism and more to do with the numbering of the Trinity ("*one* of the Trinity"), which seemed to threaten the unity of trinitarian operations. Holmes examines Boethius's attempt to reconcile the monks' language with classic trinitarianism by means of Aristotelian categories. Boethius argued that relation, as a category applied to a simple being, is necessary but not substantial. The three relations in the Godhead are thus eternal and necessary to God's life, but they are not attributable to his substance. Therefore, the Trinity cannot be properly numbered without threatening the unity of the divine nature. Stephen R. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 141-43.

Godhead suffered in the death of Christ. In order to allay these fears, Justinian suggested that the word *unus* ("one") be interpreted as *persona* ("person"). In this case, the phrase would simply be affirming that the person of Christ is to be identified with the Second Person of the Godhead. The Severans and even the theopaschites were unwilling to accept such a compromise, and Justinian's longed for reconciliation never took place. A version of the theopaschite formula did, however, make it into the anathemas of the Fifth Ecumenical Council, the Second Council of Constantinople (553): "If anyone does not confess that our Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified in flesh is true God and Lord of glory and one of the holy Trinity, let him be anathema."[38]

While this affirmation that the Second Person "was crucified in the flesh" does not necessitate a monoenergist position (and it seems clear that it did not for Justinian), some did take the theopaschite formula in a monoenergist direction. Hovorun explains the logic in diagram form:[39]

one subject of suffering

↓

one subject of activities

↓

one activity

But Justinian and others in the West interpreted the theopaschite formula in a much more Chalcedonian sense, emphasizing the Son's humanity as one "crucified in the flesh" and interpreting the unity of Christ in terms of his person. Still, the ambiguity of the theopaschite formula laid the groundwork for the looming monoenergist controversy of the next century. Hovorun concludes,

---

[38]"The Anathemas of the Second Council of Constantinople (Fifth Ecumenical)," in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward R. Hardy (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1954), 381. Emphasis added.

[39]Hovorun, *Will, Action, and Freedom*, 49.

> Only a particular aspect of the energeia, the Passions, had been placed on the agenda of the dialogue. It was, nevertheless, a first step to a more complete discussion of the issue of Christ's energeia and will that was launched in the seventh century.[40]

Dyothelite Precursors

The early manifestations of monothelitism discussed in the previous section do not appear to have sparked a "monothelite controversy" in the same way that Emperor Heraclius's *Ecthesis* would in the seventh century. Instead, the figures discussed above were criticized and, in some cases, anathematized for other aspects of their respective Christologies. But this relative silence on their monothelite views should not be interpreted as an endorsement on the part of the orthodox. From the earliest centuries of the church, Christian interpreters of Scripture have wrestled with the question of Christ's human will, primarily by interaction with the Gethsemane Narrative. Additionally, those human faculties closely associated with the will, namely, the soul and the mind, also figured prominently in the polemics of this period. This section will explore some of the early Patristic reflections on these important Christological themes.

Irenaeus. Irenaeus of Lyons (d. 202) has been referred to as "the most important Christian controversialist and theologian between the apostles and the third-century genius Origen."[41] Doubtless, Irenaeus's most important literary contribution is his five-book refutation of Gnosticism, *Adversus Haereses* (*Against Heresies*). Of particular concern for Irenaeus toward the end of book three is a defense of the real humanity of Christ over against the Gnostic rejection of the incarnation. In 3.22, Irenaeus specifically opposes those who suggest that Christ did not partake of the humanity of Mary. For Irenaeus such a position is untenable because it must deny the

---

[40]Ibid., 49-50.

[41]Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, The Early Church Fathers (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997), 1. For more on Irenaeus' theology, see Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Adam-Christ analogy that is so prominent in his theology.[42] Christ recapitulated the experience of Adam (and, therefore, humanity) by partaking in all that it means to be human, both substantially and experientially.

> For if He did not receive the substance of [His] flesh from a human being, neither was He made man, nor the Son of man. And if He was not made what we were, He did nothing great when He suffered and endured. That we, however, are a body taken from the earth and a soul that receives the Spirit of God, everyone will acknowledge. This, then, is what the Word of God became, since He recapitulated in Himself His own handiwork. For this reason, too, He professes to be the Son of Man and blesses *the meek for they shall inherit the earth*.[43]

So, for Irenaeus, Christ "was made" a body-soul complex; that is, he assumed a complete human nature. Later opponents of Apollinarianism could thus find ample support for their position in the great Father from Lyons.

Irenaeus then lists several biblical examples of Christ's genuine humanity (*sarx*). He includes Christ's experience in Gethsemane:

> On the other hand, His [supposed] "descent into Mary" would be useless. For why would He descend into her if He were to receive nothing from her? And, if He received nothing from Mary, He would never have taken of the foods got from the earth, by which the body that was taken from the earth is nourished; nor would His body have hungered and sought its food after the fast of forty days, in imitation of Moses and Elias. Neither would His disciple John, when writing of Him, have said, *So Jesus, wearied as He was with the journey, sat down*. Nor would David have exclaimed of Him in prophecy, *And they had added to the grief of my wounds*; nor would Jesus have wept over Lazarus; nor would He have sweat drops of blood; nor would He have said, *My soul is very sorrowful*; nor would blood and water have flowed from His side when it was pierced. For all these things are indications of the flesh that was taken from the earth, which He recapitulated in Himself, thus saving His handiwork.[44]

Irenaeus's burden in this passage is to demonstrate that Christ did indeed partake of the humanity of Mary and thereafter experienced the full range of human passions. Jesus ate, hungered, wearied, rested, grieved, and wept. And in the Garden of Gethsemane, he

---

[42]For an extended discussion of the recapitulation theme in Irenaeus, see Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 97-140.

[43]Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, 3.22.1. The capitalized divine pronouns and the italicized Scripture reference are original. Unless otherwise noted, the style has been preserved from the original sources cited in this dissertation.

[44]Ibid., 3.22.2.

sweated "great drops of blood" and experienced extreme sorrow. While Irenaeus does not quote the dyothelite *locus classicus* itself ("not my will but thine be done"), it is clear that he has this Gethsemane experience in mind.

Irenaeus's interpretation of Christ's experience in Gethsemane foreshadows the later dyothelite position in two important ways. First, Irenaeus attributes the agony of Gethsemane to the humanity of Christ: "For all these things are indications of the flesh that was taken from the earth, which He recapitulated in Himself, thus saving His handiwork." In his deity, the Son is the impassible creator, but by virtue of the incarnation—his assumption of human substance—he undergoes the full range of human emotions and experiences, including the anguish of his conflict in Gethsemane. This important hermeneutical move, when later combined with a more explicit affirmation of the unity of the Triune will, laid the groundwork for the dyothelite interpretation of Christ's experience in Gethsemane.[45] Second, Irenaeus's position is motivated by salvific concerns. The Son had to assume human flesh, including the capacity for Gethsemane's physical, emotional, and volitional anguish, so that he might recapitulate human experience for the purposes of human salvation. This salvific impetus would later figure prominently in Gregory's defense of Christ's human soul and Maximus's defense of Christ's human will.

Origen. The contribution of Origen of Alexandria (184-254) to the church's developing dyothelite position can be found in his classic work, *Contra Celsus* (*Against Celsus*).[46] According to Origen, some passages in the New Testament speak of Christ in

---

[45]For example, see Maximus the Confessor, *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, trans. Joseph P. Farrell (Waymart, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1990).

[46]For an introduction to Origen's life and thought, including texts of some of his most important biblical writings, see Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen* (London: Routledge, 1998). See also Ronald E. Heine, *Origen: Scholarship in Service of the Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and John A. McGuckin, ed., *The Westminster Handbook to Origen* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004).

terms of his deity while others refer more specifically to his humanity.

> We were saying in the previous arguments that some utterances of Jesus belong to the firstborn of all creation with him, such as, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life", and sayings of this character; while others belong to the supposedly human Jesus, such as this, "But now you seek to kill me, a man that has told you the truth which I heard from the Father."[47]

Origen then applies this interpretive principle to Christ's experience in Gethsemane. According to Origen, the two components of Christ's person—the "firstborn of all creation with him" and the part of him that is "supposedly human"—issue forth in two distinct expressions of desire: weakness, corresponding to the latter, and yet a "willingness of the spirit," corresponding to the former.

> Now in this instance his speaking in his humanity both of the weakness of the flesh and the willingness of the spirit. He refers to the weakness in the words, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me", and to the willingness of the spirit in "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."[48]

While Origen does not explicitly use the language of "two wills" here, the later dyothelite position is present in seed form. The incarnate Son evinces the nature of God and the nature of man, and these two components of his person yield two distinct elements: a readiness to do God's will even in the midst of the weakness of human flesh.

But Origen is quick to point out that this internal conflict is not a zero-sum game. Jesus' will is ultimately one with the divine will. More biblical passages speak of his willingness than his weakness.

> If we may also pay attention to the order of what is said, notice that the first utterance which is made, as one might say, in the weakness of the flesh occurs only once, whereas the second which is spoken in the willingness of the spirit occurs several times. For there is but one instance of the words "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me", whereas there are a number of occurrences of the latter, as "Not as I will but as thou wilt", and "My Father, if this cannot pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done". It is also to be noted that he did not merely say, "Let this cup pass from me". The saying as a whole was spoken with piety and

---

[47]Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 2.25.

[48]Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 2.25.

reverence: "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me."[49]

So even in the midst of conflicting desires, there is a functional unity between the two components of Christ's person: the divine and the human. The weakness that inheres in Christ's flesh is not determinative for his actions; his willingness of spirit perfectly matches the will of the Father. For Origen, the Gethsemane Narrative is structured in such a way as to make this functional unity abundantly clear.

Nevertheless, the human struggle of Jesus in the garden was not a sham; he genuinely experienced the pain and distress of the conflict.

> Furthermore, if as Celsus says nothing painful or grievous happened to Jesus at this time, how would posterity be able to follow Jesus as a pattern of the way to endure religious persecution, if he did not really suffer human agonies but only appeared to do so.[50]

Unlike some later authors, Origen did not interpret Jesus' words of agony in strictly pedagogical terms.[51] Jesus was not simply seeking to communicate his humanity to his disciples. No, he actually experienced the agony that he expressed in his Gethsemane prayer.

In sum, Origen anticipates later dyothelite argumentation in three important ways. First, he connects the two conflicting desires expressed by Jesus in Gethsemane to his two "natures" (to use a somewhat anachronistic Christological term). Second, he did not seek to diminish the reality of Christ's human weakness, pain, and distress, as some later authors did. Because Jesus' humanity was genuine, his sufferings were likewise genuine, not merely apparent. Finally, while Origen admits that Jesus' experienced a genuine human struggle in the garden, he leaves no room for the possibility that Jesus' human will could be at odds with the divine will. Origen believes that the Evangelists have made this point emphatically clear in their accounts of the Gethsemane Narrative.

---

[49]Ibid., 2.25.

[50]Ibid.

[51]As will be seen in the following section, Hilary took very different approach with regard to the genuineness of Jesus' pain and distress.

Hilary of Poitiers. St. Hilary of Poitiers (died c. 367) is sometimes called the "Athanasius of the West" because, in many ways, his staunch defense of Nicene orthodoxy against its Arian and Semi-Arian opponents in the fourth century can only be rivaled by the work of the bishop of Alexandria to the East.[52] Hilary's ten-book *De Trinitate*, written in exile, stands as his most lasting contribution to Christian theology. In books 9 and 10, Hilary takes up the topic of the Son's incarnation and passion. When he comes to the Christ's struggle in the Garden, Hilary takes a significantly different tack than Irenaeus. Like Irenaeus, Hilary consistently affirms the full deity and full humanity (including both body and soul) of the incarnate Son.[53] But unlike Irenaeus, Hilary tends to underemphasize the human pain of Jesus in Gethsemane and in his passion more generally.

According to Hilary, Christ's body experienced suffering, but by virtue of his divine power, he did not experience it in the same way that an ordinary human being would. "The suffering which rushes upon the body of the Lord was a suffering, but it does not manifest the nature of suffering, while on the one hand it rages with the function of pain, and on the other hand the divinity of the body receives the force of the pain rushing against it, but without feeling pain."[54] So, it seems that, for Hilary, Christ suffered in his body but not in his mind or consciousness.

What leads Hilary to this position is his insistence, against the *homoians*, that the Son is "true God of true God," to cite the language of Nicaea. Additionally, Hilary is

---

[52]Mark Weedman, *The Trinitarian Theology of Hilary of Poitiers* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 1. For more on Hilary's life and theology, see C. F. A. Borchardt, *Hilary of Poitiers' Role in the Arian Struggle* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966).

[53]On the Son's assumption of a human soul, see Hilary of Poitiers, *The Trinity*, trans. Stephen McKenna, Fathers of the Church, vol. 25, (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1954),10.21. Hilary argues that the Son assumed his body from Mary but his soul from himself. But Hilary makes it clear that Christ's full humanity is in no way compromised by this fact. Why? Because Hilary is a creationist, not a traducian, when it comes to the transmission of the soul: every human soul is derived from God and not from the reproductive act. The human soul of Jesus is no exception.

[54]Ibid., 10.23.

jealous to maintain the unity of the Son's person; if Christ is truly divine, then he cannot genuinely experience hunger, thirst, pain, and other ordinary human weaknesses.[55] How, then, are we to understand the many places in the gospels which speak of Christ hungering, thirsting, weeping, experiencing anguish, and so forth? For Hilary, the answer is found, not in any genuine need on the part of Christ, but in his ministry to the disciples:

> If, apart form the mystery of the weeping, thirst, and hunger, the assumed flesh, that is, the entire man, exposed Himself to the natures of sufferings, these things did not come about in such a manner that He was prostrated by the injuries of the sufferings, but that He who weeps does not weep for Himself, that He who thirsts banishes thirst without having to drink, and that He who is hungry does not satisfy Himself through the enjoyment of any kind of nourishment. When He was hungry, thirsty, or wept, we do not see the Lord weeping, eating, or grieving; He assumed the custom of our body in order to reveal the reality of the body so that the custom of our nature satisfied the custom of the body. When He received drink or food, He acceded not to the body's necessity, but to its custom.[56]

So the Son's weakness and pain is only apparent; it is not genuine. He deigns to express such emotions, not because he actually feels their affective force, but because he wishes to communicate to his hearers that he is indeed fully human.

Closely related to the notion of pain is the notion of fear. "Do you suppose, heretic that the Lord of glory feared to suffer?" Hilary then argues against such a view by citing Jesus' power and confidence at this betrayal and arrest and his miraculous healing of the soldier's ear. Then, Hilary finally comes to the Gethsemane Narrative.

> Perhaps it will be believed that fear gripped Him to such an extent that He begged for the cup to be taken from Him when He said: "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee. Remove this cup from me." In order that I may not be bothered with other arguments, should you not have been able to condemn your own godless stupidity even from the very text that you had read: "Put up thy sword into the

---

[55]"We profess that He is one and the same, not by losing anything that belongs to God, but by the assumption of a human nature. . . . In these different mysteries He cannot be divided from Himself in such a manner that He is not Christ, since there is no other Christ than He who in the form of God received the form of a slave, nor is He who rose again another one from Him who died, nor is He who is in heaven another one from Him who rose again, but He is not another one in heaven from Him who had previously descended from heaven." Hilary, *The Trinity*, 10.22.

[56]Hilary, *The Trinity*, 10.24. In this passage, Hilary comes dangerously close to the ancient heresy of Docetism, which denied the actuality of the incarnation.

> scabbard. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me"? How could the fear of suffering have caused Him to pray for that to be taken from Him which He was hastening to fulfill in His zeal for completing the divine plan. It is a contradiction to say that He who willed to suffer did not will to suffer. And since you were aware of His readiness to suffer, it would have been more reverential on your part to admit your ignorance of these words than to allow yourself to be so carried away by the rage of your godless folly as to assert that He, of whose willingness to suffer you were aware, prayed that He might not suffer.[57]

Hilary interprets the Synoptic account of Gethsemane through the lens of the Johannine account, where Jesus is presented with relatively more confidence. Hilary will not allow the possibility that Christ experienced a genuine conflict of desires: "It is a contradiction to say that He who willed to suffer did not will to suffer." Once again, Christ's divine power essentially cancels out any pain or fear that he might have experience as an ordinary human being in the face of suffering.

In the end, Hilary's witness is somewhat ambiguous with regard to the question of Christ's will(s). He quite clearly affirms a two-natured Christ, and his notion of a human nature includes a human soul. So, had Hilary confronted the question of Christ's human will (he does not entertain this precise question), he might have happily embraced such a notion. But because of his devaluing of the real human pain of Christ, such a concession would effectively be neutered by his understanding of how the divine nature protects the human nature from any real emotional conflict. At the very least, Hilary affirms the functional unity of Christ's humanity and his divinity. Whether or not he would have affirmed an ontologically discrete human will in Christ remains an open question. Nevertheless, Hilary's testimony is important because he demonstrates one common way that Christian interpreters have read the Gethsemane account, namely, that the Son's deity prevented any real volitional struggle or emotional pain in his human experience.

Gregory of Nazianzus. Perhaps no other writer in the early Patristic period

---

[57]Ibid., 10.30.

was as explicit in his affirmation of a discrete human mind and will in the incarnate Christ as Gregory of Nazianzus (330-379). Gregory the "Theologian," as he is known in the Orthodox East, is well known for his defense and further exposition of Nicene orthodoxy in the lead up to the Second Ecumenical Council, the First Council of Constantinople (383).[58] Along with his fellow "Cappadocian Fathers," the brothers Gregory of Nyssa and Basil "the Great" of Caesarea, Gregory helped to fill out Nicaea's statement on the Holy Spirit and to hold the line on Nicaea's *homoousian* Christology. Gregory's affirmation the human mind and will of Christ can be seen in two important passages from his Christological writings.

The first passage can be found in Greogory's *Letter to Cleonius against Apollinaris*. Here, Gregory makes one of his most definitive statements against the Apollinarian heresy.

> If anyone has put his trust in [Christ] as a man without a human mind (*nous*), he is really bereft of mind, and quite unworthy of salvation. For that which he has not assumed he has not healed; but that which is united to his Godhead is also saved. If only half Adam fell, then that which Christ assumes and saves may be half also; but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of Him that was begotten, and so be saved as whole. Let them not, then, begrudge us our complete salvation, or clothe the Saviour only with bones and nerves and portraiture of humanity. For if his manhood is without soul, even the Arians admit this, that they may attribute his Passion to the Godhead, as that which gives motion to the body is also that which suffers.[59]

Gregory makes several noteworthy points in this polemic against Apollinarianism. First, like Irenaeus before him and Maximus after him, Gregory is compelled to affirm the true humanity of Christ for soteriological reasons. For Gregory, the full humanity of Christ is not simply a theoretical concern; it is intimately related to Christian gospel. Gregory

---

[58]For more on Gregory's life and work, see Christopher A. Beeley, ed., *Re-Reading Gregory of Nazianzus: Essays on History, Theology, and Culture* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012; Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Jostein Børtnes and Thomas Hägg, eds., *Gregory of Nazianzus: Images and Reflections* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2006); Brian E. Daly, S.J., *Gregory of Nazianzus* (London: Routledge, 2006).

[59]Gregory of Nazianzus, "To Cledonius Against Apollinaris (Epistle 101)," in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward R. Hardy (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1954), 218-19.

introduces his most famous Christological axiom in this passage: "For that which he has not assumed he has not healed." Gregory's logic is simple: if there is an aspect of human nature which the Son did not assume (that is, take to himself) in the incarnation, then that aspect of humanity would be beyond the reach of Christ's redeeming work. Gregory casts this redemption in therapeutic and salvific terms: the incarnation of the Son heals our humanity and saves us from the corruption of the fall.[60] Maximus the Confessor would later cite Gregory's axiom in defense of the two wills position. If the Son did not assume a human will, then human wills could not be healed and saved by his redeeming work. If Christ had no will, Maximus would argue, "then I shall never be set free from sin. And if I cannot be freed from sin, then I have not been saved, since what is not assumed is not healed."[61]

Second, and related, Gregory frames his argument in Adamic terms. Christ, as the Last Adam, must undo the corruption brought about by the first Adam. Therefore, the extent of his incarnation must match the extent of humanity's corruption in Adam. It is not enough for the Son simply to assume a body—"bones and nerves and portraiture of humanity." He must assume the whole of humanity—body and soul—in order to provide salvation for the complete human nature. Maximus deliberately echoes Gregory's Adamic logic: "For if Adam when willing had obeyed, or while willing, considered, and after willing ate, then the faculty of will is the first thing in us that became subject to passion."[62] Gregory's axiom becomes so important for Maximus precisely because of the

---

[60]Gregory and the other Eastern Fathers often frame the redeeming work of Christ in terms of *theosis*, or deification: God became man so that man might become God. For more on the Eastern doctrine of *theosis*, see Emil Barton, *Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007). In part, T. F. Torrence bases his own version of *theosis* and Christ's vicarious humanity upon Gregory's axiom. See Myk Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance: Not Yet in the Now* (London: Ashgate, 2009), 59.

[61]Maximus, *Disputation*, 46.

[62]Ibid., 46.

importance he places upon Christ's work as the Last Adam: Christ has come, in part, to heal the volitional corruption brought about by Adam's first sin.

Third, Gregory draws a close connection between the concepts "soul" and "mind" in this passage. Apollinaris had already connected these terms in his own Christology. For Apollinaris, the Son lacked a human soul or spirit (*pneuma*) and a mind (*nous*). Instead, Christ's human nature consisted of only a human body and an animal soul (*pychē*). So Gregory's affirmation of both of these human faculties in the incarnate Christ takes direct aim at Apollinaris's monophysitism. Gregory makes the connection between soul and mind explicit:

> But if he has a soul, and yet is without a mind, how is he man, for man is not a mindless animal? And this would necessarily involve that while his form and tabernacle was human, his soul should be that of a horse or an ox, or some other of the brute creation. This, then, would be what he saves; and I have been deceived by the truth, and led to boast of an honor which had been bestowed upon another. But if his manhood is intellectual and not without mind, let them cease to be thus really mindless.[63]

The human soul and the human mind are a part of the same spiritual substance in human beings. We could also say that, for Gregory, the human soul possesses a human mind as its intellectual or rational faculty. This same logic is expressed in Chalcedon's Definition: the Son's human nature consists in a human body and a "rational soul" (*pychēs logikēs*).

Though Gregory's letter to Cleonius does not address the will of Christ per se, I think that it is reasonable to infer that Gregory would see the will, like the mind, as a faculty of the human soul. We would hardly expect Gregory to include the will as a part of the body or the animal soul of Jesus. It might be the case that Gregory sees the will as a function of the person, rather than a faculty that inheres in the soul of Christ's humanity. But the next passage we will examine seems quite clearly to exclude such a position. It is to that passage that we now turn.

---

[63]Gregory of Nazianzus, "To Cledonius," 219.

A second key passage in Gregory's corpus that bears upon the monothelite debate can be found in his fourth theological oration. Here, Gregory addresses the meaning of John 6:38 ("For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me"). His discussion of this passage and its relation to the Gethsemane Narrative is especially instructive:

> Let [the heretics] quote in the seventh place that the Son came down from heaven, not to do his own will, but the will of Him that sent him. Well, if this had not been said by himself who came down, we should say that the phrase was modeled as issuing from the human nature, not from Him who is conceived of in his character as the Saviour, for his human will cannot be opposed to God, seeing it is altogether taken into God; but conceived of simply as in our nature, inasmuch as the human will does not completely follow the divine, but for the most part struggles against and resists it. For we understand in the same way the words, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless let not what I will but thy will prevail." For it is not likely that he did not know whether it was possible or not, or that he would oppose will to will. But since, as this is the language of him who assumed our nature (for he it was who came down), and not of the nature which he assumed, we must meet the obligation in this way, that the passage does not mean that the Son has a special will of his own, besides that of the Father, but that he has not; so that the meaning would be, "Not to do mine own will, for there is none of mine apart from, but that which is common to, me and thee; for as we have one Godhead, so we have one will." [64]

Perhaps the most striking sentence in this quotation reads, "[W]e must meet the obligation this way, that the passage does not mean that the Son has a special will of his own, besides that of the Father, but that he has not." It is important to discern which "passage" Gregory has in mind here. Gregory could be referring to Jesus' words in Gethsemane, in which case he would be denying a discrete human will in the incarnate Christ. Indeed, some have mistakenly read Gregory in this way.[65] But upon closer inspection, it appears that Gregory is referring to the first passage he cites, namely, John 6:38. In this case, Gregory would be saying precisely the opposite, namely, that in Gethsemane Christ possesses two wills, one according to the "nature he assumed" (that

---

[64]Gregory of Nazianzus, "The Fourth Theological Oration—Which Is the Second on the Son," in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward R. Hardy (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1954), 185.

[65]W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew*, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 1997), 3:498.

is, his human nature) and one which shares without distinction with the Father.

Thus, according to Gregory, the orthodox must interpret these two passages in two different ways. Gregory's main burden in this quotation is the proper interpretation of John 6:38. Gregory suggests as a hypothetical possibility that we might interpret John 6:38 in the same way we do Matthew 26:39, Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane. He then offers his interpretation of Matthew 26:39. Jesus' words in the garden are "modeled as issuing from the human nature." Jesus' human nature included a "human will," which "cannot be opposed to God, seeing as it is altogether taken into God." Nevertheless, the human will, in abstraction from the incarnation, often "struggles against and resists" the divine will. So it seems that Gregory is arguing that the Son possesses a human will that is ontologically distinct from the divine will, even though, by virtue of the hypostatic union, it operates in functional unity with the divine will. Thus, Gregory understands Jesus' Gethsemane prayer to be a function of his human nature, which includes a human will ontologically distinct from yet functionally equivalent with the Father's will.

But Gregory does not believe that this kind of interpretation will work with John 6:38, because the words, "I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me," speak of an action taken by the Son before he became incarnate. He came. He made a decision to come down from heaven. John 6:38 is attributed to "him who assumed our nature (for he it was who came down)"—that is, the person of the Son apart from the incarnation—"and not of the nature which he assumed"—that is, the Son in and through his human nature. For this reason, Gregory suggests that we "must meet the obligation" in another way. He makes it clear that the Son, apart from the incarnation, does not possess a will distinct from the Father's. To repeat the controverted section:

> The passage does not mean that the Son has a special will of his own, besides that of the Father, but that he has not; so that the meaning would be, "Not to do mine own will, for there is none of mine apart from, but that which is common to, me and thee;

for as we have one Godhead, so we have one will."[66]

So how does Gregory explain the apparent distinction between the wills of the Father and the Son implied in John 6:38? He essentially suggests that Jesus' words are a figure of speech—a way of speaking about a non-reality by way of negation. Gregory explains that Scripture often speaks in this way:

> For many such expressions are used in relation to this community, and are expressed not positively but negatively; as, e.g., "God giveth not the Spirit by measure, for as a matter of fact he does not give the Spirit to the Son, nor does he measure it, for God is not measured by God; or again, "Not my transgression nor my sin." The words are used not because he has these things, but because he has them not. And again, "Nor for our righteousness which we have done," for we have not done any. And this meaning is evident also in the clauses which follow. For what, says he, is the will of my Father? That everyone that believes on the Son should be saved, and obtain the final resurrection. Now is this the will of the Father, but not of the Son? Or does he preach the gospel, and receive men's faith against his will? Who could believe that? Moreover, that passage, too, which says that the Word which is heard is not the Son's but the Father's has the same force. For I cannot see how that which is common to two can be said to belong to one alone however much I consider it, and I do not think anyone else can. If, then, you hold this opinion concerning his will, you will be right and reverent in your opinion, as I think, and as every right-minded person thinks.[67]

So any reference to an eternally distinct will in the Son cannot be taken literally; it must be taken as a way of expressing the unity of the one divine will.

The similarities between Gregory and the later dyothelite are truly remarkable. His soteriological rationale, his emphasis upon Adam Christology, his interpretation of the Gethsemane Narrative in terms of Christ's natural will, and his insistence upon a singular divine will are all echoed in the Christology of Maximus the Confessor and his dyothelite successors. Though the label is anachronistic, we would be justified in considering Gregory a dyothelite, even if he did not articulate his two-wills position with the same clarity that would later be demanded in the seventh century.

Jerome. St. Jerome (347-420) is a towering figure in the history of the

---

[66]Gregory of Nazianzus, "The Fourth Theological Oration," 185.

[67]Ibid., 185-86.

church.[68] Known for his many, erudite writings, Jerome is perhaps most famous for his work as a Bible translator and commentator. His commentary on Matthew's Gethsemane Narrative offers further evidence of the proto-dyothelitism that was emerging in the Patristic era.

At Matthew 26:39, Jerome offers the following comment:

> Having commanded the apostles to remain and watch with the Lord, going a little farther he falls on his face, and shows the humility of his mind by the disposition of his flesh. And he says affectionately: "My Father." He asks that if it is possible the cup of the Passion might pass from him, concerning which we have spoken above. But he asks not out of fear of suffering but from mercy for the first people, that he should not drink the cup offered by them. This is also why he did not expressly say: "Let the cup pass from me," but: "*this* cup," that is, the one belonging to the people of the Jews. For they can have no excuse for their ignorance if they kill me, since they have the Law and the prophets who predict me every day. And yet, returning to himself, that which he had refused with trepidation from his human persona, he confirms from the persona of the Son of God: "nevertheless, not as I will but as you will." He is saying: This "Let it be done": I am saying this not out of human feeling, but because it was by your will that I have come down to earth.[69]

Three things are worthy of note in this passage. First, Jerome echoes Hilary's concern to guard Jesus from any sense of ordinary human fear in his Gethsemane experience. Jesus did not offer his prayer "out of fear of suffering." Instead, he asked to escape the cup of suffering out of "mercy for the first people," that is, the Jewish people.

Second, Jerome assumes an interpretation of Jesus' prayer that was common in the Patristic era, namely, that Jesus was praying on behalf of the Jewish people. According to this tradition, Jesus' suffering at the request of the Jewish leaders would result in their being forsaken by God. Therefore, in Gethsemane Jesus is asking whether or not this particular means of accomplishing his death could be averted. So, his prayer is not so much for himself as it is for the Jewish people.[70] This interpretation enabled

---

[68]For more on Jerome's life and works, see Stefan Rebenich, *Jerome* (London: Routledge, 2002).

[69]Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, Fathers of the Church 117 (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press of America, 2008), 301.

[70]Origen summarizes this position well, though he did not adopt it himself: "I am aware that there is also an explanation of the passage to this effect: the Saviour saw what disasters would befall the

Christian theologians to avoid the seemingly difficult implications of having the divine Son express fear in the face of his impending death.

Third, Jerome, like Origen before him, connects the two halves of Jesus' prayer to his two natures. His "trepidation" issues forth from his "human persona," while his confidence in the divine will issues forth from "the persona of the divine Son."[71] His embrace of the divine plan does not emanate from his "human feeling" (*humano affectu*), which is characterized by trepidation, but rather from his divine understanding of his mission from the Father: "because it was by your will that I have come down to earth." As with Origen, Jerome stops short of using explicitly dyothelite language. We would hardly expect him to do so, since the challenges of the monothelite controversy still lay centuries in the future. But the fundamentals of the two-wills position are already in place in Jerome. Jesus possesses two desires in the Garden: trepidation and confidence in the divine will. These two desires issue forth from his humanity and divinity, respectively. But Jesus does not permit his natural, non-sinful human weakness to trump the will of his Father. He understands his divine mission and conforms his human desires to the divine will.

Conclusion

It would be anachronistic to suggest that there was a full-fledged monothelite controversy and a corresponding dyothelite response in the first six centuries of the

---

people and Jerusalem to avenge the acts which the Jews had dared to commit against him, and it was simply because of his love to them, and because he did not want the people to suffer what they were to suffer, that he said: 'Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me'. It is as if he said: Since as a consequence of my drinking this cup of punishment a whole nation will be deserted by thee, I pray that, if it be possible, this cup may pass from me, that thy portion which has dared to attack me may not be utterly deserted by thee." Origen, *Contra Celsus*, 2.25.

[71]Here, the Latin *persona* is not being used in any hypostatic sense, that is, as a reference to the distinct individual substance of the Son. If that were the case, then this passage would be explicitly Nestorian, since Jerome speaks of two distinct *personae* in the Son. Instead, Jerome appears to be using the term to refer to the two natures of Christ, showing the remarkable terminological flexibility still present in the fourth-century Christian West.

Christian church. The controversy over the number of wills in the incarnate Christ would only emerge in the late 630s. But there were significant precursors of both monothelitism and dyothelitism during the earlier Patristic era. Early forms of monothelitism/ monoenergism appeared in the Christologies of Apollinaris, Theodore and Nestorius, Severus and the other anti-Chalcedonian Cyrillians, and the theopaschites (at least in seed form). These early monothelitisms were challenged at least implicitly by such theological luminaries as Irenaeus, Origen, and Jerome. Gregory offers what is perhaps the most explicitly "dyothelite" arguments of the period, as he takes on Apollinaris's monophysite and monothelite Christology. The later monothelites, chief among them Maximus the Confessor, would echo many of the arguments already marshaled by theologians during this earlier period. The growing history of interpretation surrounding the Gethsemane Narrative would prove especially significant as the orthodox of the seventh century sought to respond to the monothelite controversy of their own day.

The Monothelite Controversy and the Sixth Ecumenical Council

The first major section of this chapter explored the various reflections on the will(s) of Christ in the early centuries of the church. In this section, we turn our attention to what might be called the monothelite controversy proper. Growing out of the related debate over the number of "energies" or "activities" of Christ—the monoenergism debate—the monothelite controversy began in earnest in 638, when the Byzantine emperor Heraclius issued an edict called the *Ecthesis* ("statement of belief"), which sought to end debate over the number of activities in Christ by means of imposing monothelitism on the empire. The battle over monoenergism and monothelitism raged on both political and religious fronts for over four decades until an ecumenical council was finally convened to settle the matter in 680-81. This section will explore three facets of these well-documented events: the religio-political events that lead up to the Sixth

Ecumenical Council, the important Christological contributions of Maximus the Confessor, and the decisions of the council itself.[72]

From the Monoenergist Debate to the Monothelite Controversy

To one extent or another, any retelling of the monothelite controversy must come to terms with the political realities of the seventh-century Mediterranean world. It is impossible to understand the origins and developing contours of this controversy without understanding the political calculations of the imperial and ecclesiastical leaders involved. Still, it would be a mistake to assume that the entire controversy is simply reducible to politics.[73] On such a historicist reading, theologians today might be tempted to think that the decisions of the Sixth Ecumenical Council can be more readily dismissed because they were incarnated in the complex political machinations of the Byzantine Empire, the papacy, and the Eastern patriarchal sees. But as Alister McGrath argues, such radical historicism wrongly tends to "reduce all ideational structures to epiphenomena erected upon social, economic or cultural foundations."[74] Doctrinal debates are inescapably imbedded in history, but they are not reducible to historical

---

[72]For more on the history and theology of the Third Council of Constantinople, see Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils: Their History and Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1983), 258-89; George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, rev. ed., trans. Joan Hussey (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1969), 87-146; John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975); Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 2, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)*, 62-75; Hovorun, *Will, Action and Freedom*, 53-162; Paul Verghese, "The Monothelite Controversy—A Historical Survey," *Greek Orthodox Review* 13 (1968): 196-2008.

[73]*The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* claims that "The heresy was of political rather than of religious origin, being designed to rally the Monophysites to their orthodox (Chalcedonian) fellow-Christians when division endangered the Empire, faced with Persian and later Mohammedean invasions." There is some truth to this assessment, as will be shown below. Heraclius was certainly motivated by political concerns, as were many of his ecclesiastical collaborators, but it is too cynical to assume that the same was true for all of the players involved in the unfolding monothelite drama. See "Monothelitism," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 932.

[74]Alister E. McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundations of Doctrinal Criticism*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 92.

explanation alone. Otherwise, we would be left with what McGrath calls "conceptual relativism."[75] Furthermore, historicism also fails to account adequately for the historical situatedness of the historian herself. There is no "view from nowhere."[76] Everyone is imbedded in some cultural-linguistic context; but this observation does not inhibit any further doctrinal debate. As Christian theologians, we also must come to terms with the fact of God's self-revelation in Scripture and with the ongoing, illuminating work of the Holy Spirit in the church. In sum, exploring the political backdrop to Constantinople III is a necessary but insufficient condition for understanding the Christological implications of the monothelite controversy. In this subsection, we will explore some of these political realities but will mostly focus attention upon the theological debates that moved the church from a discussion of the activities of Christ to the explicit controversy concerning his will(s).

Emperor Heraclius (r. 610-641) and his ecclesiastical ally Sergius, Patriarch of Constantinople (610-38), are largely responsible for the origins of the monoenergist debate. Leo Donald Davis explains the religio-political calculations that led to the controversy:

> As the eastern and southern provinces—Armenia, Syria, and Egypt—were regained to the Empire, the emperor had to face once again the religious question, how to reconcile the dissident Monophysites without alienating Chalcedonian Asia Minor, Italy, and Africa. . . . It fell to the Patriarch Sergius to provide the theological basis for ecclesiastical reconciliation.[77]

In short, Sergius sought to steer middle course between the two-natures doctrine of Chalcedon, on the one hand, and the one-nature doctrine of the monophysites, on the

---

[75]Ibid.

[76]This memorable phrase has its origin in Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). It has become commonplace for philosophers and theologians to recognize the perspectival nature of human knowledge. For a Reformed evangelical appropriation of this observation, but one that does not collapse into relativism, see John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987).

[77]Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 261.

other. His proposed solution was to maintain Chalcedon's distinction of the two natures but to emphasize the unity of these two natures in the one activity/energy/operation (*energēia*) of the Son.[78] The person of the Son is the sole actor, subject, and agent of all of the actions of the incarnate Christ. Sergius did not invent the one-energy position out of whole cloth. He found precedent for his view in the previous work of Severus, who in turn found inspiration in the famous line from Pseudo-Dionysius: "a certain divine-human (*theandric*) energy of God made man."[79] In Sergius' monoenergism, Heraclius had found the theological rationale he needed for his reconciliation project. In 633, Cyrus bishop of Phasis drafted a Pact of Union, which affirmed Sergius's one-energy position. Heraclius had succeeded in making peace with the monophysite peoples: the Armenians, the Syrian Jacobites and the Egyptian Copts.[80]

The most significant immediate opposition to the mononergist position came from the newly elected Patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronius (560-638). According to Sophronius, activity is not a function of Christ's person but rather of his two natures. Davis explains the patriarch's logic:

> For Sophronius the duality of operations results from the duality of the natures and their properties. . . . Since the being of the natures is distinct, it followed that the operations are also distinct. To deny the duality of operations could lead to the fusion of the natures, for by means of operations, natures are discerned; differences of operation enable us to realize the diversity of substances.[81]

---

[78]*Energeia* was one of the Greek terms that the monoenergists used to describe the unity of the Son's activity. But as Jarslav Pelikan explains, further terminological distinctions also grew up around this debate: "'Action (ἐνέργεια)' was a technical term used by Aristotle to refer to operation (as it was translated into Latin, as well as to actuality as distinguished from potentiality. Sometimes it was closely related to 'function (ἀποτέλεσμα).' In the course of the controversy over 'one action' in Christ, it became necessary to specify the meaning of the term more precisely and to distinguish between 'action (ἐνέργεια),' 'activity (ἐνέργητικόν),' which was defined as the nature from which action proceeds,' 'act (ἐνέργημα),' defined as the outcome of action, and 'the agent (ἐνεργῶν),' defined as the one who uses the action, the hypostasis." Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition*, 2:63-64.

[79]Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 263.

[80]Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 262-63; Verghese, "The Monothelite Controversy," 196-97.

[81]Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 265.

Sophronius made known his opposition to monoenergism in a synodical letter written in 634, but Sergius was able to win over the emperor and Pope Honorius (d. 638) to his own developing position. Siding with Cyrus, Sergius convinced the emperor to call for a moratorium on any discussion of Christ's *energeiai*. In 636 Heraclius issued an edict, prepared by Sergius, called the *Ecthesis*, which effectively ended the debate over the energies of Christ, but in the process sparked a new controversy over the wills of Christ.

Heraclius' monoenergist compromise had unraveled. Discussion of Christ's energies had proved to be too controversial. So instead, the *Ecthesis* suggested that the unity of Christ's natures is to be found in a single will, the faculty of choice. The edict maintained that there can be only "one will of our Lord Jesus Christ," because "at no time did his flesh animated by a reasonable soul not produce his physical movements in a manner separated from or contrary to the will of God the Word, with which it was hypostatically united."[82] The peace was short-lived, however, because Honorius' papal successors all condemned the *Ecthesis*'s one-will position. Even the Byzantine emperors did not maintain the edict's sanctions. Heraclius's successor Constans II repealed the edict and extended its proscriptions to include any discussion of the wills of Christ. Still, many in Constantinople remained convinced that the *Ecthesis* had struck the proper balance. The monothelite controversy was well underway when dyothelitism's ablest opponent stepped onto the stage.[83]

The Contribution of Maximus the Confessor

Maximus the Confessor (580-662) was born in 580 to noble parents in Constantinople.[84] He received an elite education and as a young man served as a

[82]*Ecthesis*, cited in Verghese, "The Monothelite Controversy," 200.

[83]Ibid., 200-202.

[84]The following resources are among the better introductions in English to Maximus's life and theology: Demtrios Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint*

secretary in Heraclius's court. In 610, Maximus resigned his imperial position to devote himself to a monastic life. By the time of his death in 662, in his early eighties, Maximus had laid the Christological groundwork for the church's dyothelite position, which was ratified at the Sixth Ecumenical Council two decades later (680-81).

It is difficult to overstate the significance of Maximus's theology for the emerging dyothelite consensus in the early medieval period. Canonized both in the East and the West, Maximus's theology was especially influential in the Byzantine East, particularly in the seminal works of John of Damascus. Maximus has rightly been called "the real father of Byzantine theology."[85] However, during his lifetime Maximus's adherence to the dyothelite cause did not come without cost. For his opposition to imperial monothelitism, Maximus was exiled twice, tortured, and, according to one report, had his tongue and right hand cut off—a symbolic gesture denouncing his promulgation of dyothelitism in word and writ.[86] Through it all, Maximus remained convinced that Chalcedon's two-natures doctrine demanded the two-wills doctrine as its corollary. Like Gregory before him, Maximus was motivated by soteriological concerns; only if Christ assumed a human will can he bring divine healing to fallen human wills. For Maximus both activities and wills belong to natures, not persons. Echoing his mentor Sophronius, Maximus maintained that a nature is only discernible in its actions, but he made the further clarification that actions can only be brought about by wills. Therefore, since Christ possesses two natures, then he must possess two energies and two wills.

While themes related to the "will" run throughout Maximus's corpus, we will focus attention on three texts in particular that explicitly bear upon the monothelite

---

Maximus the Confessor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996).

[85]Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 37.

[86]Louth, *Maximus*, 18.

controversy: Opuscule 7, *The Disputation with Pyrrhus*, and Opuscule 3.

Opuscule 7. In his Opuscule 7, Maximus addresses a certain Marinus, a deacon in Cyprus, concerning the errors of monoenergism and monothelitism. Drawing from several Patristic texts, including Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Cyril of Alexandria, Maximus argues that Christ assumed human nature as an integrated whole—body and soul.[87] And to possess a human soul is to possess a human will:

> If, then, [his humanity] has a rational soul, then it possesses the natural will. For everything that is rational by nature also possesses a will by nature. If then, as man, he has a natural will, he certainly wills in reality those things that, as God by nature, he has fashioned and introduced naturally into the constitution of [God Incarnate]. For he did not come to debase the nature which he himself, as God and Word, had made, but he came that that nature might be thoroughly deified which, with the good pleasure of the Father and and [*sic*] the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, he willed to unite to himself in one and the same *hypostasis*, with everything that naturally belongs to it, apart from sin.[88]

Here, Maximus deliberately casts his position in Chalcedonian terms. According to Chalcedon's "Definition," Christ's humanity consists of "a rational soul and a body." For Maximus, this conciliar position on the human nature of Christ demands dyothelitism. To possess a rational human soul is to possess a human will. Maximus, like Gregory before him, draws a close connection between reason/mind and will. The Son assumed a whole human nature so that he might bring salvation, conceived of in terms of *theosis* ("divinization"), to the whole of human nature. Thus, Maximus echoes Gregory of Nazianzus: the unassumed is unhealed—or, to coin a phrase, the unassumed is undivinized. Also like Gregory, Maximus casts Christ's saving work in Adamic terms. Christ's assumption of a complete human nature brought about the dissolution of "all the divisions introduced by the transgression of the old Adam, through which nature has been

---

[87]Ibid., 180.

[88]Maximus, *Opuscule 7*, in Louth, *Maximus*, 185.

condemened to death."[89] The human will, which apart from Adam's fall would have been naturally oriented toward God, has now been bent back toward God through the obedience of the Last Adam.

The Disputation with Pyrrhus. Maximus's second major work against the monothelites is encapsulated in his debate with Pyrrhus. In 645, Pyrrhus, patriarch of Constantinople, agreed to a public debate with Maximus over monothelitism. For political reasons, Pyrrhus "allowed himself to be convinced of the error of monothelitism," though he later recanted his recantation of the one-will view (again, for political reasons).[90] Still, the debate itself preserves in dialogical form Maximus's most complete defense of the two-wills position. The Disputation is relatively lengthy (72 pages in the most common English translation) and would require a lengthy section to unpack its riches fully. By way of summary, Thomas Watts has provided a helpful five-section outline of Maximus's argument.

> In the first [section], Maximus answers real monothelite objections against the dyothlite position; these objections try to show that it is absurd to speak of two wills in Christ, and that the only possible alternative is one will. The second section turns to verbal monothelite objections, which allow that Christ has two natural wills, but protest that it nevertheless ought to be possible to speak of one will in some sense, or that it is wrong to be so dogmatic on the number of wills. In the third section, Maximus examines two positive arguments for monothelitism, which contain a mixture of real and verbal elements. The fourth section considers what the Fathers and the Scriptures teach, and discusses briefly some of the history of the controversy to that date. In the final section, Maximus insists on examining Pyrrhus's arguments concerning the energies of Christ that he cites in support of monoenergism.[91]

To add some substance to this summary, there are several important terminological distinctions that are central to Maximus's case against monothelitism. First, Maximus makes a distinction between the will as a faculty, or capacity of operation, and the will as

---

[89]Maximus, *Opuscule 7*, 184.

[90]Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 274.

[91]Thomas A. Watts, "Two Wills in Christ? Contemporary Objections Considered in Light of a Critical Examination of Maximus the Confessor's *Disputation with Pyrrhus*," *WTJ* 71 (2009), 459.

an object, action, or purpose.[92] To put it differently, *the will* is conceptually distinct from *what is willed*.[93] Maximus draws an optical analogy: "The will and the mode of willing are not the same, just as the power of sight and the mode of perception are not the same."[94] The capacity to will is in inherent in human nature, but the use of this capacity in any given act of willing is something different. This distinction is important for Maximus because it allows him to combat the monothelite argument that a natural will, that is, a will inherent in the nature of a thing, would imply compulsion. By distinguishing the will from particular acts of the will, Maximus preserves the Son's freedom from compulsion, even though his natural will is sinlessly inclined toward the good.[95]

Second, Maximus insists that this faculty of the will is *natural* not *personal*. The will inheres in the nature, not the person. Pyrrhus assumes precisely the opposite: "If Christ be one person, then He willed as one person. And if He willed as one person, then doubtless He hath one will, and not two."[96] For Maximus, persons will and act according to their natures. Since Christ possesses two natures, then he wills and acts according to both natures. Therefore, he wills "dually and not singly."[97] However, the Son's two

---

[92]Maximus, *Disputation*, 9.

[93]Watts, "Two Wills in Christ?," 461. Watts points out that Maximus made this distinction in the Greek, with *thelēma/thelēsis* meaning the faculty of will inherent in a nature and *thelēton* referring to the object of that will.

[94]Maximus, *Disputation*, 10.

[95]Ibid., xxv-xxvi. This distinction is important in contemporary discussions of monothelitism as well. Definitions are key. What do we mean when we say that Christ has one or two "wills"? What the tradition has meant in affirming two wills in Christ is simply this: that the incarnate Christ possesses two capacities of operation, two volitional capacities—the capacity to act as God, which he has possessed eternally, and the capacity to act as man, which he possesses only contingently in his incarnate state. "Will," in this context, denotes the capacity, not the object or purpose of volition. This distinction also has implications for the Trinitarian aspects of the monothelite debate. In the traditional view, the Godhead possesses one will, one volitional capacity, even if the three *hypostases* produce different effects through that one will, tied to their distinct personal properties and economic roles.

[96]Maximus, *Disputation*, 4.

[97]Ibid., 4.

wills are not opposed to one another; they function together toward the same end, namely, the salvation of the world.

> Therefore, Christ existeth as God and as man by nature. Then He did will as God and as man, or only as Christ? If it were Christ who willed and initiated actions, being both God and man, then it is clear that, being one and the same, He willed dually and not singly. For if Christ be nothing else apart from the natures from which and in which He existeth, then obviously He willeth and operateth in a manner corresponding to each of His natures, in other words, as each nature is capable of operating. And if He hath two natures, then He surely must have two natural wills, the wills and essential operations being equal in number to the natures. For just as the number of natures of the one and the same Christ, correctly understood and explained, doth not divide Christ but rather preserveth the distinction of natures in the union, so likewise the number of essential attributes, wills, and operations attached to those two natures doth not divide Christ either. For throughout both of His natures there flowed the same activity and purpose, to wit, our salvation. This introduceth no division—God forbid!—but rather shows that they are preserved unimpaired, in their entirety, even in the union.[98]

Once again, Maximus sees his position as the logical corollary of Chalcedon. Just as there are two natures hypostatically united in Christ, without confusion, change, division, or separation, so there are two natural wills united in the one *hypostasis* of the Son functioning toward the same goal.

Maximus also considers the Trinitarian implications of Pyrrhus's view. For Pyrrhus, wills belong to persons, not natures. He argues that a will implies a "willer," that is, a person who commands the will.99 Maximus's responds by applying Pyrrhus's logic to the Trinity:

> For if one suggests that a "willer" is implied in the notion of the will, then by the exact inversion of this principle of reasoning, a will is implied in the notion of a "willer." Thus, wilt thou say that because of the one will of the superessential Godhead there is only one hypostasis, as did Sabellius, or that because there are three hypostases there are also three wills, and because of this, three natures as well, since the canons and definitions of the Fathers say that the distinction of wills implieth a distinction of natures? So said Arius![100]

Maximus assumes that the same conceptual distinctions that obtain in Christological

---

[98]Ibid., 4-5.

[99]Ibid., 5.

[100]Ibid., 5-6.

debates also apply to the doctrine of the Trinity. "Person" and "nature" appear in both doctrinal contexts, and Maximus seeks to use them consistently in both. After all, the Fifth Ecumenical Council had made it clear that the person of Christ is the person of the eternal Son: "one of the Holy Trinity." So here Maximus tests Pyrrhus's personal-will position by applying it to the immanent Trinity. If a will implies a willer, then a willer must imply a will. When we apply this logic to the Trinity, we are caught on the horns of a heretical dilemma. If we affirm one divine will, as monotheism seems to demand, then we must conclude that there is only one person (*hypostasis*) in the Godhead, which was the error of Sabellian modalism. If, on the other hand, we affirm three divine wills, then we must also posit three divine natures, which would leave us either with some kind of tri-theism or else Arianism.[101] Either way, Maximus argues, monothelitism would leave us in Trinitarian heresy.

Third, Maximus makes a distinction between the natural will and what he calls the "gnomic will." The gnomic will (from *gnōmē*, "intention") was introduced into humanity by virtue of the Fall. It represents a deliberation between choices based upon sin and ignorance. While Christ possesses a natural human will, he does not possess this corrupted gnomic will. It is important to note that this gnomic will is not a natural faculty that the Son lacks. Instead, it refers to "the particular hypostatic acts of willing in a sinful human being."[102] For Maximus, the gnomic will is "nothing else than an act of willing in

---

[101]There is a flaw in Maximus's logic here. Maximus begs the question with regard to the proper location of the will. He assumes, claiming Patristic support, that "the distinction of wills implieth a distinction of natures." In other words, he assumes that wills belong to natures. But this is precisely the point being debated. Pyrrhus would not have to accept Maximus's premise here. Pyrrhus could argue that three wills subsist in the one divine nature. This would not necessarily imply tri-theism and it would avoid any hint of Arianism. This seems to be the position of contemporary social Trinitarians. As we saw in chapter 2, when the logic of monothelitism is applied to the Trinity, it seems inevitably to lead to some kind of social Trinitarianism. One of the great burdens of such a view is demonstrating precisely how it can avoid tri-theism. If the will does not inhere in the divine nature but rather in the three Persons, what remains of their unity? Is it simply a unity of purpose? Or simply a perichoretic unity between three distinct rational and volitional subjects? These problems will be explored further in chap. 5 below.

[102]Watts, "Two Wills in Christ?," 481.

a particular way, in relation to some real or assumed good."[103] Therefore, nothing is missing from the integrated whole of Christ's human nature. All that is absent is sin.[104]

Opscule 3. This distinction between the natural and the gnomic will is detailed further in Maximus's Opscule 3, another letter to the deacon Marinus. Maximus claims that the Fathers "openly confessed the difference between two natural, but not gnomic, wills in Christ. . . . For they knew that it was only this difference of gnomic wills that introduced into our lives sin and separation from God."105 Maximus's treatment of the Gethsemane Narrative is also notable in this brief letter:

> Therefore, in his natural capacity, the Saviour is distinguished as a human being, willing in a fleshly way the shrinking in the face of death together with the rest of the passions, showing the economy to be pure of fantasy, and redeeming the nature from the passions to which it has been condemned as a result of sin. And again he shows his eager desire, putting death to death in the flesh, in order that he might show as a human being that what is natural is saved in himself, and that he might demonstrate, as God, the Father's *great* and ineffable *purpose*, fulfilled in the body. For it was not primarily in order to suffer, but in order to save, that he became a human being. Therefore, he said, *Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not mine, but your will be done*; showing, in the shrinking, the determination of the human will shaped and brought to be (in harmony with the divine will) in accordance with the interweaving of the natural *logos* with the mode of the economy. . . . The Saviour therefore possesses as a human being a natural will, which is shaped, but not opposed to God in any way, not even in inclination, for a personal division would appear, if it were natural, and the Creator would be to blame, for having made something that was at odds with itself by nature.[106]

The last sentence is the most difficult. Maximus's point seems to be once again that Christ does not possess a gnomic will: an inclination away from the divine will. If he did, then his opposition to the divine will would be intrinsic to his God-given humanity, since this will would belong to his nature. In short, the distinction between the natural

---

[103]Maximus, *Disputation*, 30.

[104]Thus, Maximus's view is to be contrasted with certain modern theologians, who have suggested that the Son assumed a fallen human nature in the incarnation (e.g., Karl Barth and T. F. Torrance). For a critique of this fallen-human-nature view, see Oliver Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 90-117.

[105]Maximus, *Opuscule 3*, in Louth, *Maximus*, 197.

[106]Maximus, *Opuscule 3*, 194.

and the gnomic will is simply an instance of the first distinction mentioned above, namely, the distinction between the will as a faculty and the will as an object. Christ possesses a discrete human will that plays an important role in his redeeming work. It is no mere "fantasy." He genuinely experiences the fear of death—the natural "shrinking in the face of death" one would expect from a human being. But this fear in no way implies an inclination away from the will of God. Christ's will is "shaped" and brought into harmony with the divine will, but it is never set in opposition to the divine will (as is the case with fallen, gnomic wills). He does not cite it here, but Maximus's point is very close to the writer of Hebrews: "Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered" (Heb 5:8). The shaping of his human will to the divine will is genuine, but the outcome is never in doubt and the process is never tainted by sin or unbelief on the part of Christ.

Summary and assessment. Maximus theological contribution to the dyothelite cause can be summarized under four heads. First, he clarifies how the key Christological terms apply to the faculty of the will. Maximus, following Gregory of Nazianzus, maintains that wills belong to natures, not persons. This position was implicit in the Chalcedonian Definition itself. Christ's human nature consists of a human body and a "rational soul." A soul possessed of reason is also possessed of volition, since mind and will are so intimately related in the human soul.

Second, Maximus makes the case for dyothelitism largely on soteriological grounds. Gregory's axiom is central to his argument: the unassumed is unhealed. Christ must assume a human will in order to redeem fallen human wills. The will was intimately involved at sin's inception, and it must be engaged in sin's defeat.

Third, and related, Maximus argues for dyothelitism from the biblically rich perspective of Adam Christology. Just as the First Adam used his volition to transgress God's commandments, so too must the Last Adam live out obedience and experience

passion through this human faculty.

Finally, Maximus makes clear the implications of the monothelite debate for the doctrine of the Trinity. If wills belong to persons and there are three persons in the Godhead, then there must be three wills in the Holy Trinity. Such a position would be untenable for Maximus. According to Maximus, wills belong to natures and since there is one divine nature, there is only one divine will which is shared by the three Divine Persons.

Constantinople III and Its Aftermath

After Maximus's death, the battle over monothelitism continued, especially in the East. Finally, a council was convened at Constantinople in 680 to discuss the differences between Eastern and Western Christianity. In the West, none of the popes had followed Honorius in affirming monothelitism. Indeed, the current pope, Agatho (678-81), made clear to the emperor Constantine IV (r. 668-685), that he and his predecessors had always affirmed the two-wills doctrine.[107] The East was represented principally by Patriarch George of Constantinople and Patriarch Macarius of Antioch, both of whom had monothelite sympathies. In the course of the council, which spanned eighteen sessions over a period of two years, George became convinced of the dyothelite position. Macarius, however, stood his ground, even resorting to dubious tactics to defend his position. He was eventually deposed for falsifying patristic documents that made his monothelite position appear to have an ancient pedigree. His replacement, Theophanes, signed on with 174 other bishops to the council's ruling in favor of dyothelitism.[108]

After affirming the previous five ecumenical councils, Leo's Tome, and

---

[107]Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 279.

[108]Ibid., 280-82.

Cyril's denunciation of Nestorianism, the Sixth Ecumenical Council issued a statement of faith. The key passage with regard to the monothelite controversy reads as follows:

> We also proclaim two natural willings or wills in him and two natural operations, without separation, without change, without partition, without confusion, according to the teaching of the holy Fathers—and two natural wills not contrary [to each other], God forbid, as the impious heretics have said [they would be], but his human will following, and not resisting or opposing, but rather subject to his divine will, according to the all-wise Athanasius. For as his flesh is called and is the flesh of God the Word, so also the natural will of his flesh is called and is God the Word's own will as he himself says: "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of the Father who sent me," calling the will of the flesh his own, as also the flesh had become his own.[109]

Note three important aspects of this passage. First, like Maximus, the council's statement deliberately casts the two-wills position in the language of Chalcedon, using the previous councils four privatives. The two wills of Christ are united in the person of the Son "without separation, without change, without partition, without confusion." The church in ecumenical council had sided with Maximus over Pyrrhus: wills belong to natures, not persons. Therefore, by Chalcedonian logic, Christ must have two wills.

Second, the council also follows Maximus in adamantly denying the possibility that Christ's two wills could be in conflict. The statement does not use Maximus's term, gnomic will, but the concept is clearly set forth. The Son does not possess the moral corruption that would incline his human will away from the divine will. Instead, his human will, though ontologically distinct from the divine will, is functionally one with the divine will. It does not resist or oppose the divine will but is always and ever subject to it.

Third, the councils ruling makes it clear that the two-wills position is not Nestorian. The human will of Christ belongs to only one hypostasis, the hypostasis of the Son. It is his as much as his human body. Because wills belong to natures, the presence of a discrete human will in Christ does not imply a second person in him. In Cyrillian

---

[109]"The Statement of Faith of the Third Council of Constantinople (Sixth Ecumenical)," in Hardy, ed., *Christology of the Later Fathers*, 383.

fashion, the council emphasizes that the two wills find their unity in the person of the Divine Son. Echoing the once controversial phrase of the theopaschites, which had already been affirmed at the Second Council of Constantinople, the council also makes it clear that the person who possess this human will is "one of the holy and life-bestowing Trinity."110

Though there were some debates between East and West over the council's civil laws, the monothelite controversy had come to and with the Third Council of Constantinople. The dyothelite position of Sophronius and Maximus had won. This position would be received as orthodoxy throughout the medieval period and into the Reformation era.

Medieval Dyothelitism

The medieval era after Constantinople III witnessed no great controversies over the dyothelite position. The medieval divines assumed the conciliar position and sometimes explicitly depended upon Maximus for their biblical and theological defenses of it. This section will briefly examine the dyothelite theology of John of Damascus in the East and Thomas Aquinas in the West.

John of Damascus

John of Damascus (676-749) was a Syrian monk, priest, and theologian who is perhaps most well known for this defense of icon veneration in the iconoclastic controversy of the eighth century.[111] His most comprehensive work of theology, *The Orthodox Faith*, is also his most influential. It was translated into Latin and "became the principal means of access to the dogmatic tradition of the Greek East for the scholastics

---

[110]Ibid.

[111]On John's life and thought, see Andrew Louth, *St John of Damascus: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

of the High Middle Ages."[112]

When John comes to the matter of Christ's wills, his defense of dyothelitism is remarkably similar to Maximus:

> Since, then, Christ has two natures, we say that He has two natural wills and two natural operations. On the other hand, since these two natures have one Person, we say that He is one and the same who wills and acts naturally according to both natures, of which and in which is Christ our God, and which are Christ our God. And we say that He wills and acts in each, not independently, but in concert. "For in each form He wills and acts in communion with the other." For the will and operation of things having the same substance is the same, and the will and operation of things having different substances is different. Conversely, the substance of things having the same will and operation is the same, whereas that of things having a different will and operation is different.[113]

Like Maximus, John argues that wills belong to natures. Since Christ has two natures, then he must have two wills. But also like Maximus, John rejects any notion that these two wills can be opposed to one another. Christ's two wills are hypostatically united in him and work "not independently, but in concert."

John also echoes Maximus in applying the notion of "natural will" to the Trinity and in highlighting the soteriological necessity of Christ's two wills.

> Thus, in Father and Son and Holy Ghost we discover the identity of nature from the identity of operation and the will. In the divine Incarnation, on the other hand, we discover the difference of the nature from the difference of the wills and operations, and knowing the difference of the natures we confess the difference of the wills and operations. For, just as the number of the natures piously understood and declared to belong to the one and the same Christ does not divide this one Christ, but shows that the difference of the natures is maintained even in the union, neither does the number of the wills and operations belonging substantially to His natures introduce any division—God forbid—for in both of His natures He wills and acts for our salvation. On the contrary, their number shows the preservation and maintenance of the natures even in the union, and this alone. We do not call the wills and operations personal, but natural. I am referring to that very faculty of willing and acting by force of which things which will will and things which act act. For, if we concede these to be personal, then we shall be forced to say that the three Persons of the Holy Trinity differ in will and operation.[114]

---

[112]Ibid., 84.

[113]John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*, in John of Damascus, Writings, trans. Frederic H. Chase, Jr., Fathers of the Church, vol. 37 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1958), 3.14. The quoted passage is from Leo's *Tome*, 28.4.

[114]Ibid.

This Trinitarian argument figures prominently in John's defense of the two wills position. He emphatically rejects the possibility that the will belongs to the "Person." If such were the case, then there would be three wills in the Godhead. One will in Christ would yield three wills in the Trinity, which is an unthinkable proposition for the Damascene.

John also defends the two-wills position from the perspective of an Adam Christology:

> If, then, Adam willingly gave ear, and willed and ate, then the will was the first thing to suffer in us. But, if the will was the first thing to suffer, and if, when the Word became incarnate, He did not assume it, then we have not been made free from sin.[115]

Gregory's axiom can be heard in the background of John's words here. The will was the first faculty in Adam's humanity to experience the corruption of sin. Therefore, it is the first part in his posterity to "suffer" the same corruption. So there is a soteriological utility to Christ's assumption of a human will. Had he not assumed a human will, and recapitulated human obedience through it, then fallen human wills could not be freed from the corruption of sin.

Thomas Aquinas

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), one of the most prolific and influential theologians of the High Middle Ages, was directly dependent upon John of Damascus for his defense of dyotheltism.[116] In the "Third Part" of his classic *Summa Theologica*, Thomas takes up the question of Christ's will. He addresses a question similar to the one Pyrrhus raised against Maximus: "It would seem that in Christ there are not two wills,

---

[115]Ibid.

[116]The literature on Thomas is voluminous. For a lengthy compilation of the secondary literature, see Joseph P. Wawrykow, *The Westminster Handbook to Thomas Aquinas* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 181-190. Especially helpful with regard to Thomas' Christology is Richard Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). See also the discussion of Thomas in Marilyn McCord Adams, *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 108-43.

one Divine, the other human. For the will is the first mover and first commander in whoever wills." After citing further monothelite objections, Thomas quotes the Gethsemane Narrative (Luke 22:42) as biblical evidence for the two wills position. He also cites Ambrose's commentary on this passage:

> And Ambrose, quoting this to the Emperor Gratian (De Fide ii, 7) says: "As He assumed my will, He assumed my sorrow;" and on Lk. 22:42 he says: "His will, He refers to the Man—the Father's, to the Godhead. For the will of man is temporal, and the will of the Godhead eternal."[117]

Thomas then gives his definitive response to the monothelite position:

> And hence in the sixth Council held at Constantinople [Act. 18] it was decreed that it must be said that there are two wills in Christ, in the following passage: "In accordance with what the Prophets of old taught us concerning Christ, and as He taught us Himself, and the Symbol of the Holy Fathers has handed down to us, we confess two natural wills in Him and two natural operations." And this much it was necessary to say. For it is manifest that the Son of God assumed a perfect human nature, as was shown above (Q[5]; Q[9], A[1]). Now the will pertains to the perfection of human nature, being one of its natural powers, even as the intellect, as was stated in the FP, QQ[79],80. Hence we must say that the Son of God assumed a human will, together with human nature. Now by the assumption of human nature the Son of God suffered no diminution of what pertains to His Divine Nature, to which it belongs to have a will, as was said in the FP, Q[19], A[1]. Hence it must be said that there are two wills in Christ, i.e. one human, the other Divine.[118]

Thomas argues that the two-wills position of Constantinople III follows logically from the two-natures position of Chalcedon. Christ assumed "the perfection of human nature," which Chalcedon defined in terms of a body and a "rational soul." Thomas argues that the will and the intellect are proper parts of human nature. Therefore, the Son's assumption of a human nature demands his assumption of a human will. At the same time, he did not surrender his divine nature in the incarnation. So he did not give up the one divine will that he shares with the Father and Spirit. As a two-natured person, the incarnate Son is also a two-willed person.

---

[117]Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, ed. Daniel J. Sullivan (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), 3.18.1.

[118]Ibid.

Conclusion

On the eve of the Reformation, the church's dyothelite consensus was firmly established. It had developed piecemeal during the Patristic era, as Christian theologians sought to respond to Christological heresies such as Apollinarianism. Ironically, heresies on both ends of the Christological spectrum (from Apollinarianism to Nestorianism) affirmed something close to the later monothelite position. By the time the church responded formally to the monothelite controversy at the Third Council of Constantinople, it had a rich tradition of biblical and theological reflection on the human will of Christ from which it could draw. The great defender of the dyothelite cause, Maximus the Confessor, provided the theological substance of the council's decision, though he died more than two decades before it was convened. The council's decision was accepted as the orthodox position, in both the East and the West, throughout the medieval period and beyond.

As we move toward the Reformation in the next chapter, it would be beneficial to summarize some of the key dyothelite arguments from the Patristic and medieval periods that would also figure prominently in Reformed defenses of dyothelitism. Our three dogmatic foci once again serve to guide our discussion.

First, in terms of Christology proper, the Reformed would echo Maximus's insistence that dyothelitism is simply the logical corollary to Chalcedon's two natures doctrine. In other words, the monothelite controversy was largely a matter of defining the key Christological terms. What is a nature? What is a person? To which does the will belong? The dyothelite tradition had given a clear and unambiguous answer: the will inheres in the nature, not the person. The person is a subsistence or supposit in a nature, but the nature houses, so to speak, the mind and the will; the person subsists in this psychological/volitional nature. With this broader dyothelite tradition, the Reformed would argue that the Son is in no way limited to his human nature in the incarnation. He continues to subsist in the divine will and to carry out his divine functions as the Second

Person of the Godhead. So as God and man, the God-Man possesses two wills: the human will he assumed in the incarnation and the divine will he eternally shares with the Father and Spirit.

Second, the Trinitarian arguments of patristic and medieval dyothelitism would also find expression in Reformed Christology. Reformed theologians assumed the classical understanding of the Trinity, including the traditional understanding of the unity of the divine will. For Calvin and the Reformed tradition, Christ cannot possess a divine will distinct from the Father's. There is and can only be one divine will; any distinction between the will of the Son and the will of the Father spoken of in Scripture must be attributable to the Son's assumption of a discrete human will.

Third, the Reformed were animated by soteriological concerns no less than Gregory, Maximus, and the Damascene. But while these Eastern Fathers would conceive of salvation in terms of *theosis*, the Reformed would most often speak of Christ's redeeming work in federal and forensic terms. Still, for the Reformed, Christ's assumption of a human will was necessary in order for him to accomplish redemption on behalf of his people. Reformed dyothelitism also made use of Adam Christology in its defense of Christ's two wills. As the Last Adam, Christ recapitulates human experience as the federal head of his people. His human will is necessary for this task precisely because he must live out obedience, in both its active and passive dimensions, through a human will. Only then can he serve as an adequate representative and substitute on behalf of fallen human beings. In sum, the Reformed arguments in favor of dyothelitism are best understood as developments from within an established biblical and theological tradition inherited from the Patristic Christological consensus.

CHAPTER 4

RETRIEVING DYOTHELITISM II: REFORMED DYOTHELITISM

Introduction

The previous chapter concluded by noting several important arguments, integral to the patristic and medieval defense of dyothelitism, that would be further developed in the Reformed tradition. In this chapter, we turn to Reformed dyothelitism itself. For reasons unique to their own traditions, the Lutherans[1] and the Anabaptists[2] tended not to emphasize the two-wills of Christ in their treatments of the incarnation. As a result, we will focus our attention exclusively on the Reformed tradition. This decision is also motivated by the restraints of the thesis of this dissertation: it is our aim to demonstrate the unique contribution of Reformed dyothelitism especially as it relates to contemporary monothelite proposals. As in the previous chapter, our historical approach

---

[1]For example, Luther's notes on the Gethsemane Narrative make no mention of the monothelite controversy, though he does interpret Jesus' agony in terms of his deity and humanity, as well as his sin-bearing, substitutionary work. See Martin Luther, *Luther's Explanatory Notes on the Gospels*, trans. P. Anstadt, ed. E. Mueller (York, PA: Anstadt & Sons, 1899), 144-46. Despite Luther's silence on the monothelite debate, there is one Christological theme found in his writings and later developed by Lutheran theologians (especially beginning with Brenz) that would have important implications for the development of Reformed Christology, namely, the Lutheran understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum* and consequent rejection of the *extra Calvinisticum*. This issue will be discussed further in the section on Calvin below. For an introduction to the Lutheran-Reformed debate from a contemporary Lutheran perspective, see Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1976), 97-101.

[2]Some early Anabaptists had trouble affirming the content of the first four ecumenical councils, let alone the sixth. Menno Simons' Christology is notable for its self-consciously monophysite character. See Egil Grislis, "The Doctrine of the Incarnation according to Menno Simons," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 8 (1990): 16-33. Grislis points out that "since the 18th century Mennonites have returned to traditional Chalcedonian two-nature Christology, and appear at times to be slightly embarrassed about Menno's monophysite stand." For a contemporary Anabaptist treatment of Christology, see Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, Historical, Constructive* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 365-420.

will be representative in nature. We will focus on a quartet of Reformed theologians, who represent four eras in the Reformed movement: John Calvin in the Reformation era, John Gill in the Post-Reformation era, W. G. T. Shedd in the nineteenth century, and T. F. Torrance in the twentieth century. As we will see, these theologians, in their own distinctive ways, interpreted the Gethsemane Narrative in a dyothelite fashion, but their understanding of our three dogmatic loci (Christology proper, Trinity, and soteriology) also provided a fitting home for a dyothelite model of the Incarnation.

The Mediatorial Christ: John Calvin's Dyothelite Christology

Calvin's Christology

The Christological character of Calvin's theology has been well documented.[3] While Calvin wrote on a wide range of topics, many Calvin scholars recognize the irreducibly Christological character of his entire theological enterprise. A strong case can be made that "Calvin's entire theology is conditioned by his understanding of redemption through Christ" and that "Calvin's chief concern, humanity's relationship with God, is accomplished in Christ and our incorporation into his body."[4] Insofar as Calvin's theology is concerned with the knowledge of God, it must be Christological, since after Adam's first sin, "the whole knowledge of God the Creator . . . would be useless unless

---

[3]See especially Stephen Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). See also the discussions of Calvin's Christology in J. F. Jansen, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Work of Christ* (London: James Clark, 1956); Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008); François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1995); and E. David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-Called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 1966).

[4]Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology*, 2. Edmondson is quoting (in the first quotation) and then paraphrasing (in the second) Brian Armstrong, "The Nature and Structure of Calvin's Thought According to the *Institutes*: Another Look," in John Calvin's Institutes, His Opus Magnum: Proceedings from the Second South African Congress for Calvin Research (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1986), 70, 61.

faith also followed, setting forth for us God the Father in Christ."[5]

Attempts to summarize adequately the richness of Calvin's Christology are perhaps doomed to fail from the start. Barth's oft-quoted lines about Calvin bear repeating in this context:

> Calvin is a cataract, a primeval forest, a demonic power, something directly down from the Himalayas, absolutely Chinese, strange, mythological; I lack completely the means, the suction cups, even to assimilate this phenomenon, not to speak of presenting it adequately. . . . I could gladly and profitably set myself down and spend all the rest of my life just with Calvin.[6]

Nevertheless, many have attempted the impossible and have sought to set down the major contours of Calvin's Christology. Several common themes emerge from the most prominent treatments of the topic; we will treat each of these themes in turn: Christ as Mediator, Christ's three-fold office, the *extra Calvinisticum*, and Calvin's use of the classic Christological terms: person and nature.

Christ as Mediator. Arguably more so than the theologians of the medieval period, Calvin oriented his Christology around Christ's role as the mediator, focusing special attention on his redeeming work as prophet, priest, and king. The following passage from Calvin's *Institutes* reveals this prominent theme:

> This will become even clearer if we call to mind that what the Mediator was to accomplish was no common thing. His task was so to restore us to God's grace as to make of the children of men, children of God; of the heirs of Gehenna, heirs of the Heavenly Kingdom. Who could have done this had not the self-same Son of God become the Son of man, and had not so taken what was ours as to impart what was his to us, and to make what was his by nature ours by grace? Therefore, relying on this pledge we trust that we are sons of God, for God's natural Son fashioned for himself a body from our body, flesh from our flesh, bones from our bones, that he might be one with us [Gen. 2:23-24, mediated through Eph. 5:29-31]. Ungrudgingly he took our nature upon himself to impart to us what was his, and to become both Son of God and Son of man in common with us. Hence that holy

---

[5]John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 2.6.1.

[6]Karl Barth and Eduard Thurneysen, *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth-Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925*, trans. James D. Smart (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1964), 101.

> brotherhood which he commends with his own lips when he says: "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God [John 20:17]. In this way we are assured of the inheritance of the Heavenly Kingdom; for the only Son of God, to whom it wholly belongs, has adopted us as his brothers. "For if brothers, then also fellow heirs with him." [Rom. 8:17 p.].
>
> For the same reason it was also imperative that he who was to become our Redeemer be true God and true man. It was his task to swallow up death. Who but the Life could do this? It was his task to conquer sin. Who but very Righteousness could do this? It was his task to rout the powers of world and air. Who but a power higher than world and air could do this? Now where does life or righteousness, or lordship and authority of heaven lie but with God alone? Therefore our most merciful God, when he willed that we be redeemed, made himself our Redeemer in the person of his only-begotten Son [cf. Rom. 5:8].[7]

This passage reveals just how determinative the work of Christ was for Calvin's understanding of the person of Christ. Christ must be both God and man precisely because of the great work of mediation he came to accomplish.[8] Calvin is mounting an Anslemian argument here. If the world is to be redeemed from sin, it is necessary that God should be become a man—that the Mediator should be "true God and true man."[9] Calvin is also echoing the Athanasian understanding of Christ's incarnational work: God became man so that man might share in that which is God's, that is, the Son's own divine inheritance. This is not exactly the *theosis* of the Eastern Fathers, but it expresses Calvin's own unique perspective on the same kind of incarnational logic.

The prominence of Christ's role as Mediator in Calvin's Christology can be put in stark relief by a brief examination of his controversy with Francesco Stancaro.[10]

---

[7] Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.12.2.

[8]Thus, for Calvin, the incarnation is prompted only by humanity's need for redemption. Calvin's position is set over against that of Duns Scotus and other medieval divines who argued that the incarnation would have taken place regardless of human sin, because it was always in the plan of God to unite humanity and divinity. For a contemporary treatment of this "incarnation anyway" position, see Edwin Chr. van Driel, *Incarnation Anyway: Arguments for Supralapsarian Christology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[9]Calvin, like Anselm, notes that this necessity is not absolute but is rather contingent upon God's free decision to save sinners. "If someone asks why this is necessary, there has been no simple (to use a common expression) or absolute necessity. Rather, it has stemmed from a heavenly decree, on which men's salvation depended." Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.12.1.

[10]For an insightful discussion of the Stancaro controversy, see Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology*, 14-39. Edmondson sees Calvin's response to Stancaro as a window into his entire

Stancaro was an Italian theologian who suggested that, while the Son is both God and man, his work as Mediator is carried out only through his human nature. Because the divine nature belongs to all three persons of the Godhead, the Son cannot serve as Mediator between God and man in his divine nature. Building upon a long tradition of anti-Arian polemics, Stancaro argued that to make mediation a part of Christ's divine nature would threaten his unity with the other two divine persons.

Calvin reacted vehemently to this apparent separation of the two natures in the one Mediator. For Calvin, the work of mediation is "an activity carried out by a person, not by his natures, though this person certainly is only able to carry out this activity on the basis of his natures."[11] His divinity is as crucial for Christ's mediating work as is his humanity. Christ's work of mediation cannot be reduced to his human suffering and death. In Calvin's words,

> Christ did not fulfill all the duties of his office by expiation and sacrifice. What does it mean to overcome death? To rise in the power of the Spirit and receive life from oneself? To unite us to God and to be one with God? Without doubt, these will not be found in Christ's human nature apart from the divinity, yet they do come into consideration when it is a question of the Mediator's office.[12]

In short, Calvin's Christology was shaped by his understanding of Christ's work of mediation. For Calvin, this work of mediation is carried out by the singular person of Christ who possesses (and must possess) the nature of God and the nature of man as perquisites for his mediating ministry.

The *Munus Triplex*. Also relevant for Calvin's Christology is the so-called *munus triplex*, or "threefold office" of Christ: prophet, priest, and king. There are historical precedents to Calvin's emphasis on the *munus triplex*. As Paul Dafydd Jones

---

Christological approach—with notion of Christ as Mediator front and center.

[11]Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology*, 31.

[12]"Calvin's Second Reply," quoted in Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology*, 32.

explains,

> The *munus triplex* . . . has a fascinating past that wends its way from patristic roots through Aquinas's suggestive formulations, through various versions of Calvin's *Institutes* to sixteenth and seventeenth-century creeds and manuals, and concludes with disputes internal to nineteenth and early twentieth-century European protestant thought.[13]

So while the threefold office of Christ is not unique to Calvin, it does seem to have served a uniquely agenda-setting role in his understanding of the person of Christ. Closely related to Mediator theme, the *munus triplex* reveals how determinative the biblical economy of salvation was for Calvin's Christology. Calvin cautions that even heretics and "papists" often use the same terminology as the orthodox, which makes careful consideration of the biblical text all the more necessary:

> Therefore, in order that faith may find a firm basis for salvation in Christ, and thus rest in him this principle must be laid down: the office enjoined upon Christ by the Father consists of three parts. For he was given to be prophet, king, and priest.[14]

Christ's identity and mission can be ascertained by examining the three Old Testament anointed offices that he fulfills. He comes as prophet to "carry out the office of teaching" and to extend his teaching through the Spirit-empowered preaching of "his whole body," the church.[15] He comes as king to reign spiritually over his people and "[to enrich] his people with all things necessary for the eternal salvation of souls and [to fortify] them with courage to stand unconquerable against all the assaults of spiritual enemies."[16]

The *Extra Calvinisticum*. Calvin's *extra* is well-known,[17] and while it does not serve as the predominant theme in his Christology, it does point to some of the

---

[13]Paul Dafydd Jones, *The Humanity of Christ: Christology in Karl Barth's* Church Dogmatics (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 123.

[14]Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.15.1.

[15]Ibid., 2.15.2.

[16]Ibid., 2.15.4.

[17]All of the major discussions of Calvin's Christology spend considerable space exploring the *extra*. See n. 3 above.

defining characteristics of his approach to the person of Christ. Paul Helm defines the *extra Cavlinisticum* as follows: "This is the view that in the Incarnation God the Son retained divine properties such as immensity and omnipresence and that therefore Chris was not physically confined within the limits of a human person."[18] The idea behind the *extra* is that God the Son is not confined within or limited to his human nature. In Calvin's own words, "[E]ven if the Word in his immeasurable essence united with the nature of man into one person, we do not imagine that he was confined therein."[19] The *extra* reflects Calvin's conviction that "the finite cannot contain the infinite" (*finitum non capax infiniti*).[20]

While the *extra Calvinisticum* expresses a broader principle in Calvin's Christology, its most well-known expression comes in Calvin's treatment of the Lord's Supper. The context for Calvin's Eucharistic articulation of the *extra* is to be found in the sixteenth century Lutheran-Reformed debates over the real presence of Christ in the Supper. The Lutherans had argued that the elements of the Lord's Supper actually contain the physical body and blood of the risen Christ. Luther himself rooted this understanding of the Supper primarily in a literal reading of the words of institution ("This is my body/blood"). But one of Luther's secondary arguments, which was developed more fully in the subsequent Lutheran tradition, was more Christological in nature. Luther and his followers (especially Johannes Brenz) maintained that by virtue of the hypostatic union and the *communicatio idiomatum* some of the divine attributes were transferred to the human nature of Christ in his exalted state. Thus, after his ascension,

---

[18]Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 58.

[19]Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.13.4.

[20]Carlos M. N. Eire points out that while Calvin never explicitly uses this phrase, it adequately expresses one of his principle concerns in Christian worship, namely, that the divine nature radically transcends the material elements of Christian worship. For more on the Eucharistic context for the *extra*, see below. Carolos M. N. Eire, "Calvin's Attack on Idolatry," in *John Calvin and the Church: A Prism of Reform*, ed. Timothy George (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 249-50.

Christ's human nature possesses the attribute of ubiquity, or omnipresence. Therefore, Christ can be seated at the right hand of God and, at the same time, present in every Eucharistic celebration on earth.[21]

Calvin, however, rejected this position as a confusion of Christ's two natures—the same mistake made by the ancient heretic, Eutyches. For Calvin, each of Christ's two natures must be allowed to retain "unimpaired its own distinctive character." It will not do to cite the communication of attributes, because the Lutherans fundamentally misunderstand this Patristic doctrine. According to Calvin, the *communicatio idiomatum* is not a literal description of property transfer. Instead, it is simply a manner of speaking—a rhetorical expression in which Christ is named according to one of his natures but described in terms of the other.[22] So, for example, Calvin cites 1 Corinthians 2:8, which speaks of "the Lord of glory" being crucified.

> Surely, when the Lord of glory is said to be crucified [1 Cor 2:8], Paul does not mean that he suffered anything in his divinity, but he says this because the same Christ, who was cast down and despised, and suffered in the flesh, was God and Lord of glory. In this way he was also Son of man in heaven [John 3:13], for the very same Christ, who, according to the flesh, dwelt as Son on man on earth, was God in heaven.[23]

Lutherans lampooned this Reformed position as Calvin's *extra*, as if part of the Logos were spilling out of his humanity. But, as E. David Willis has demonstrated, Calvin's

---

[21]For a brief but helpful summary of the Lutheran-Reformed debate, see John Patrick Donnelly's introduction to his translation of Peter Martyr Vermigli's *Dialogue on the Two Natures in Christ*. Vermigli's work was penned in response to Brenz's Christological argument. For Vermigli and the Reformed writers, the Lutheran position came dangerously close to monophysitism by confusing the two natures of Christ. Instead, the Reformed theologians argued for the distinction of the two natures even in the exalted state. Not even in glory does the human nature of Christ take on the property of immensity. The unity of the two natures is to be found in the singular hypostasis of the Son, not in any actual transference of properties from one nature to another. Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Dialogue on the Two Natures in Christ*, trans. John Patrick Donnelly, S.J. (Kirksville, MO: The Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1995), ix-xxv.

[22]Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas*, 76. Helm demonstrates that Calvin restricts the *communicatio*'s meaning to this "improper" rhetorical device. However, Helm also points out that Calvin affirmed the substance underneath the medieval interpretation of the *communicatio* (namely, that the properties of both natures are attributable to the same person), even if he didn't use the term to describe this reality.

[23]Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.30.

position is more consistent with the Patristic understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum*. Willis even suggests that the *extra Calvinisticum* could be rebranded the *extra Catholicum* or the *extra Patristicum* because of its widespread acceptance in the Patristic era and beyond. In Calvin's Christology, the *extra* served to protect the distinction of the two natures of Christ and to affirm the unchanging divinity of the Son even in his incarnate state.

Calvin and the Chalcedonian Definition. When it comes to the classic Christological terms, person and nature, Calvin was no innovator. He defended a traditional understanding of these Chalcedonian terms, even if they find unique expression in his own developed Christology. For Calvin, "person" (Latin, *persona*) functioned in several different ways. Calvin could sometimes use the term to refer to an individual's "office or role."[24] In this sense, when Calvin speaks of the person of Christ, he is referring to Christ the Mediator—the God-Man, who is subordinate to the Father in his redeeming mission. Calvin can also use the term "person" more straightforwardly as a "somebody" or "personage." In this case, the person of Christ is more properly the person of the Son who subsists in two natures. Also noteworthy is Calvin's trinitarian use of "person" as a "subsistence in the essence of God."[25] Calvin's use of "nature" or "substance" (Latin, *substantia*) was likewise eclectic, depending on the context. But when applied to Christ's human nature, substance refers to the whole of what it means to be a human being, including both body and soul, with the latter including both mind and will.[26] In sum, Calvin's Christological usage of "person" and "nature" was largely

---

[24]For a helpful discussion, see Jill Raitt, "Calvin's Use of *Persona*," in *Calvinus Ecclesiae Genevensis Custos*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1984), 273-87. See also the helpful discussion in Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology*, 182-219.

[25]Calvin, *Institutes* 1.13.6.

[26]It is clear from Calvin's condemnation of the Apollinarians and Monothelites that he includes soul and will in the human nature that Christ assumed in the incarnation. Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.16.12.

traditional. Calvin understood a person to be an individual—a "somebody"—who subsists in a nature. The nature, then, is the "stuff"—the properties—in which the person subsists, including the intellectual and volitional capacities of the person.

Calvin's Explicit Dyothelitism

We now turn our attention to Calvin's dyothelitism. We will treat this subject in two phases. First, we will examine the explicit affirmations of dyothelitism in Calvin's commentaries and in the *Institutes*. Second, we will suggest some ways in which Calvin's Christology more generally seems to imply a dyothelite understanding of the person of Christ.

Commentary on the Gethsemane Narrative. In his commentary on the Gethsemane Narrative, Calvin explicitly addresses the monothelite heresy. Especially relevant is his exposition of Jesus' words, "Yet not my will, but thine be done" (Luke 22:42 par.). On this most significant dyothelite proof-text, Calvin writes,

> This passage shows plainly enough the gross folly of those ancient heretics, who were called *Monothelites*, because they imagined that the will of Christ was but one and simple; for Christ, as he was God, *willed* nothing different from the Father; and therefore, it follows, that his human soul had affections distinct from the secret purpose of God.[27]

Calvin's logic seems to be as follows:

> Premise 1: Christ *qua* divine possesses the same will as the Father.
>
> Premise 2: Christ's prayer in Gethsemane indicates that he possesses a will distinct from the Father.
>
> Conclusion: Therefore, Christ must have assumed a human will, in addition to his divine will, when he assumed a human soul; that is, Christ *qua* human possesses a will distinct from the Father.

According to Calvin, Christ *qua* divine ("as he was God") cannot will anything different than the Father. This assumption is absolutely critical for Calvin: the persons of the

---

[27]John Calvin, *A Commentary on A Harmony of the Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, trans. William Pringle, in *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 3:233.

Godhead share the identically same will.[28] The logic of the monothelites—that wills belong to persons, not natures—when pushed back into the Trinity would demand three distinct wills within the Godhead. This notion is unthinkable for Calvin.

But just as crucial for Calvin is the assumption that Christ possesses a will distinct from the Father. Otherwise, how could he pray this conflicted prayer in Gethsemane? So, if the Son's will is said to be distinct from the will of the Father, as is implied in the Gethsemane narrative, then it must be a *human* will possessed by the Son that is in view. Hence, for Calvin, the Son possesses two distinct wills united in his one person.

Calvin then applies this dyothelite interpretation of Jesus' prayer in two ways. First, he sees Christ fulfilling an exemplary function in his prayer. Calvin writes,

> But if even Christ was under the necessity of holding his will captive, in order to subject it to the government of God, though it was properly regulated, how carefully ought we to repress the violence of our feelings, which are always inconsiderate, and rash, and full of rebellion?[29]

The argument is *a minori ad maius*: from the lesser to the greater. Christ, possessing a sinless and "regulated" human will, had a lesser need for repressing his desires and submitting himself to the decree of God than ordinary, fallen human beings. So how much more ought those with sinful wills—wills given to the violence of inconsiderate, rash, and rebellious "feelings"—work to repress those feelings. Christ, though sinless, still experienced real human desires and so can serve as a legitimate example for his

---

[28]Perhaps one could interpret Calvin minimalistically here. That is, perhaps Calvin is merely saying is that the divine persons share a common *functional* will—a common purpose or plan. In this interpretation, Social Trinitarianism would be still a Reformed possibility; Calvin has left open the possibility that the divine persons possess distinct *ontological* wills, as a part of their distinct personhood. But this Social Trinitarian interpretation does not seem to fit the evidence. Calvin moves seamlessly between talking about "the will of Christ" and the act of Christ's willing. In other words, it seems that, for Calvin, a Triune volitional function demands a Triune volitional ontology. Christ's will is not "one and simple" because he shares the numerically same will as the Father and has taken to himself a distinct human will. Furthermore, in a Social Trinitarian interpretation of Calvin, there would have to be four wills, rather than merely two, in the field of play: the three divine wills and the distinct human will of Christ. Ockham's razor would seem to be helpful in this complicated scheme.

[29]Calvin, *A Commentary on A Harmony of the Evangelists*, 3:233.

followers. Thus, Calvin would seem to be sympathetic to the exemplary motivation of contemporary Spirit Christologians. Christ, in his human will, rendered obedience to God from a position of human weakness and therefore can serve as an adequate example for Christian obedience.

Interestingly, Calvin even seems to suggest that the Holy Spirit plays a common role in both Christ's obedience and ours. Immediately after the passage quoted above, Calvin continues:

> And though the Spirit of God governs us, so that we wish nothing but what is agreeable to reason, still we owe to God such obedience as to endure patiently that our wishes should not be granted. For the modesty of faith consists in permitting God to appoint differently from what we desire. Above all, when we have no certain and special promise, we ought to abide by this rule, not to ask any thing but on the condition that God shall fulfil what he has decreed; which cannot be done, unless we give up our wishes to his disposal.[30]

Calvin seems to be comparing Christ's state of possessing a "regulated" will with the Christian's state of being governed by the Holy Spirit. His point is concessive: Even if we are not acting out of a rebellious will and are instead being governed by the Spirit, nonetheless, we, like Jesus in his "regulated" state, still need to surrender our desires to the will and decree of God. Calvin does not explicitly say that Christ's regulated will is made possible by the empowering of the Holy Spirit, but the parallel to the Christian's experience of being governed by the Spirit at least establishes the point of comparison necessary in order to present Christ as an exemplary figure.[31]

Calvin's logic here is remarkably similar that of contemporary Spirit Christology proponents. Indeed, one of the main motivations behind Spirit Christology is precisely this exemplary role of Jesus as the Spirit-empowered man. Let us call it the

---

[30]Ibid.

[31]Calvin addresses the relationship between Christ and the Spirit in several places in his corpus. See, for example, his commentary on such passages as Luke 4:18, John 3:34, and Matt 12:28. John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003). See also his discussion of the Spirit's anointing vis-à-vis the *munus triplex* in Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.15.2.

"exemplary motivation." For example, consider the argument of Bruce Ware in his book *The Man Christ Jesus*:

> The most pressing application of this understanding of Jesus [as one empowered by the Spirit] is that the life of obedience and faithfulness that Jesus lived can genuinely and rightly be set forward as an example of how we, too, should live, precisely because the very resources Jesus used to live his obedient life are resources given also to all of us who trust and follow him. Think of it: he relied on the Word of God, and we too have that same divinely inspired Word. He relied on prayer, and we too have full access to the throne of grace though the entrance Jesus has established on our behalf. And importantly he relied on the Spirit, who empowered him to do the things he did and to carry out the supernatural works God called him to do, and we too now have that very same Spirit.[32]

Klaus Issler expresses a similar concern: "The degree to which Jesus depended on the Father and the Spirit, instead of his own divine power, is the degree to which Jesus can be our example."[33] Likewise, Garrett DeWeese writes,

> Analagous to Nazianzus' maxim, "The unassumed is not healed," perhaps a second maxim should guide Christology: "The unexemplified is not an example." That is, to whatever degree Jesus fails to exemplify the qualities of human personhood, to that degree he fails to be our example.[34]

The key difference between Calvin and these contemporary Spirit Christologians is that, for the latter, Spirit Christology and the exemplary motivation underneath it require monothelitism. As DeWeese puts it, "If Jesus really has two minds and two wills, then the exemplary nature of his perfect obedience, prayer life, resisting temptation, suffering, and so on, become highly problematic. But according to the contemporary [one-will] model, Jesus truly is our example of a perfect human individual."[35]

---

[32]Bruce A. Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 43-44.

[33]Klaus Issler, "Jesus's Example: Prototype of the Dependent, Spirit-Filled Life," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 191.

[34]Garrett J. Dewisee, "One Person, Two Nature: Two Metaphysical Models of the Incarnation," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 151.

[35]Ibid., 151-52.

However, for Calvin, an emphasis on the Spirit's role in Jesus' life and ministry does not necessitate a one-will Christology. In fact, we can state this point even more forcefully. It seems that for Calvin Christ's dependence upon the Holy Spirit is *only made possible* because he possesses two wills. It is only by virtue of the Son's incarnation—and specifically his assumption of a human soul with "affections distinct from the secret purpose of God"—that he exists in a state which would require regulation by the Holy Spirit. The Son of God as such needs no such Spirit empowerment for the regulation of his divine will. In his divinity, he continues to carry out the one will of God without any hesitation. So, in good Chalcedonian fashion, Calvin is affirming that the single person of the Son simultaneously experiences both volitional unity with the Father (by virtue of his divinity) and volitional distinction from the Father (by virtue of his humanity). This last point takes us squarely into the realm of the *extra Calvinisticum*, which will be discussed more below. But for the present purposes, it is sufficient to note that Calvin's own "Spirit Christology" is decidedly dyothelite in its orientation. The Son is anointed, empowered, and regulated by the Holy Spirit in and through his human soul, and this human experience in no way threatens his simultaneous divine willing.

A second application of Calvin's dyothelite interpretation of the Gethsemane narrative is tied to his emphasis on Christ's role as Mediator: In his Gethsemane prayer, Christ was fulfilling a representative function; he "takes our infirmities" upon himself and emerges triumphant in his vicarious struggle. Here, Calvin asks the question, "What advantage did Christ gain by praying?" For an answer, he turns to Hebrews 5:7, which is perhaps an allusion to the Gethsemane Narrative: "He was heard on account of his fear." According to Calvin, what Christ feared was not death itself but rather "the wrath of God exhibited to him, as he stood at the tribunal of God charged with the sins of the whole world."[36] Calvin critiques those who would suggest that it is below the dignity of Christ

---

[36]Calvin, *A Commentary on A Harmony of the Evangelists*, 3:234.

to experience real fear at these prospects. Calvin unashamedly affirms the real terror Christ experienced in the face of being "swallowed up by death."[37]

Despite Christ's fear in the face of God's wrath, his faith "remained firm and unshaken," according to Calvin. And yet, his firm resolve was not automatic. Some "foolishly imagine that he was victorious without fighting," but for Calvin Christ genuinely "felt, without being wounded by them, those temptations which pierce us with their stings."[38] Christ turns to his disciples for comfort, but they are unable to watch and pray with him even one hour.

> For though he did not need the assistance of any one, yet as he had voluntarily taken upon him our infirmities, and as it was chiefly in this struggle that he intended to give a proof of that *emptying of himself*, of which Paul speaks (Philip. ii.7,) we need not wonder if the indifference of those whom he had selected to be his companions added a heavy and distressing burden to his grief.[39]

So in the face of both divine wrath and human abandonment, Christ remained faithful, despite his exceeding sorrow. Thus, Christ accomplishes his work of mediation precisely by facing head-on, *and as a human being*, the horrific prospects of the wrath of God.

To conclude our discussion of Calvin's treatment of the Gethsemane Narrative, there appear to be two distinct motivations for his dyothelite interpretation—one trinitarian and the other soteriological. First, Calvin is intent upon preserving the volitional unity of the divine persons. "For Christ, as he was God, *willed* nothing different from the Father." If there is a distinction of wills to be found in Gethsemane, it must be explained by recourse to the incarnation. Only as incarnate can the Son possess a human soul (and therefore, a human will) that has "affections distinct from the secret purposes of God." Second, Calvin is concerned to preserve the exemplary and representative aspects of Christ's redemptive work. Christ genuinely holds his will

---

[37]Ibid.

[38]Calvin, *A Commentary on A Harmony of the Evangelists*, 3:234.

[39]Ibid., 3:235 (emphasis in the translation to mark off the scriptural allusion).

"captive, in order to subject it to the government of God." In this way, he serves as our Spirit-empowered example. Christ also genuinely experiences the terror of the wrath of God because he has "voluntarily taken upon [himself] our infirmities." In this way, he serves as our true human representative, accomplishing salvation for humanity from the inside out, so to speak. In short, Calvin's dyothelite interpretation of Gethsemane turns out to be more than simple proof-texting. Instead, Calvin's dyothelitism is woven into the fabric of his broader theology, including his understanding of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the salvation that Christ came to accomplish.

Dyothelitism in the *Institutes*. In his magnum opus, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin references monothelitism only once: in Book II, Chapter XVI, where he treats Christ's work of redemption as outlined in the Apostles' Creed. Calvin's condemnation of monothelitism comes in his discussion of Christ's descent into hell. Rejecting the traditional "harrowing of hell" interpretation, Calvin interprets Christ's descent into hell in terms of his spiritual torment on the cross.[40] Calvin is jealous to preserve the authenticity of Christ's psychological torment in his Passion, and this torment is seen preeminently in Gethsemane. The medieval scholastics tended to interpret the biblical descriptions of Christ's torment as merely revelatory; that is, Christ was merely demonstrating his humanity to his disciples. But Calvin wishes to give these biblical descriptions their full force. He derives his position from a straightforward reading of the biblical text. Christ's torment must be genuine, because he sweated drops of blood. And this torment was no mere show, because he experienced his agony alone, not for the benefit of others. For Calvin, to diminish Christ's agony in Gethsemane is to diminish his great work of redemption. "Yet here is our wisdom: duly to feel how much

[40]For more on Calvin's treatment of Christ's torment, see Thomas H. McCall, *Forsaken: The Trinity and the Cross, And Why It Matters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 28-29.

our salvation cost the Son of God."[41]

Christ's prayer in Gethsemane demonstrates that he understood the full ramifications of his impending death. Though Christ's human flesh showed weakness, this weakness should not be interpreted as a lack of faith. For Calvin, even the so-called cry of dereliction cannot be interpreted as faithless. "For even though he suffered beyond measure, he did not cease to call him his God, by whom he cried out that he had been forsaken."[42] At this point, Calvin turns his attention to monothelitism, which he considers alongside the heresy of Apollinarianism:

> Now this refutes the error of Apollinaris, as well as that of the so-called Monothelites. Apollinaris claimed that Christ had an eternal spirit instead of a soul, so that he was only half a man. As if he could atone for our sins in any other way than by obeying the Father! But where is inclination or will to obey except in the soul? We know that it was for this reason that his soul was troubled: to drive away fear and bring peace and repose to our souls. Against the Monothelites, we see that he did not will as man what he willed according to his divine nature. I pass over the fact that, with a contrary emotion, he overcame the fear of which we have spoken. This plainly appears to be a great paradox: "Father, save me from this hour?" No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father glorify thy name" [John 12:27-28]. Yet in his perplexity there was no extravagant behavior such as is seen in us when we strive mightily to control ourselves.[43]

There are several important features of this passage. First, it is important to notice how closely Calvin associates monothelitism with Apollinarianism. As we saw in chapter three, the latter heresy maintained that the Son assumed a human body (and an animal soul) but did not assume a human soul/spirit. Instead, the person of the Son functions in place of the human soul in the Apollinarian scheme. Calvin, with the rest of the Chalcedonian tradition, rejects Apollinaris's Christology on the grounds that it makes Christ out to be less than fully human—"only half a man," in Calvin's words. In short, Apollinarianism tends to emphasize the divinity of the Son at the cost of his true

---

[41]Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.16.12.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid.

humanity. But in Calvin's understanding of the biblical text, the Son's genuine psychological and volitional struggles—whether in Gethsemane, as evidenced by his prayer for the cup's removal, or on the cross, as evidenced by his cry of dereliction—demonstrate that the Son did indeed assume a human soul that was distinct from his divine nature. Both Apollinarianism and monothelitism falter, therefore, because they fail to account for the Son's full humanity: the former by denying Christ's assumption of a human soul and the latter by denying Christ's assumption of a human will.

Second, this passage highlights Calvin's belief that Christ's human obedience was necessary for his work of redemption. For Calvin, Christ's assumption of a human will was necessary for soteriological reasons: "As if he could atone for our sins in any other way than by obeying the Father! But where is inclination or will to obey except in the soul?" Atonement can only be accomplished through the Son's representative obedience. And the Son's representative obedience can only be accomplished if he is adequately suited to be our representative. In other words, only if the Son possesses a human will can he render human obedience to God and therefore atone for humanity's sin. Calvin's argument is strikingly Maximian on this point. Like Maximus, Calvin argues that humanity's right standing with God must be recovered precisely where it was first lost: at the level of human volition. Dyothelitism is required for soteriological reasons, if for nothing else.

Third, in making this soteriological argument, Calvin explicitly locates the will in the soul. "Where is inclination or will to obey except in the human soul?" Here, Calvin once again echoes Maximus and the dyothelite tradition more generally. The will inheres in the human soul, which, in turn, belongs properly to human nature. Thus, wills belong to natures, not persons. Therefore, by Chalcedonian logic, Christ must have two wills, since he possesses two natures. To use more contemporary language, we may say

that Calvin posits a "concrete human nature" understanding of the incarnation.[44] The Son assumes a concrete human soul in which inheres a concrete human will, which is distinct from the one divine will he shares eternally with the Father and Spirit.

Finally, it is important to note how Calvin situates Christ's conflicting desires within the context of dyothelitism. In doing so, he is enabled to give full play to Christ's genuine humanity, including his genuine psychological and volitional struggles in the face of death. Strikingly, Calvin claims that Christ "did not will as man what he willed according to his divine nature." The two wills are ontologically distinct as evidenced by the genuine torment Christ faced in his Passion. At the same time, Calvin maintains that no final conflict can remain between Christ's two wills, because the Son's human will was perfectly, if progressively, conformed to the divine will. Calvin is not suggesting that Christ moved from sinful resistance to faithful submission—far from it. Instead, Calvin argues that in the face of natural, non-sinful "perplexity," the Son displayed "no extravagant behavior" but instead surrendered himself to the Father's will.

Calvin's Implicit Dyothelitism

In addition to Calvin's explicit denunciations of monotheltism, a number of themes in Calvin's Christology seem to imply dyothelitism. As we saw in Calvin's discussion of the Gethsemane Narrative, his dyothelite position fits within his broader understanding of the person and work of Christ. Calvin's four major Christological themes discussed above will guide our discussion.

The Mediator and the *Munus Triplex*. Because of their significant overlap, we can treat the first two themes together: Christ the Mediator and the *munus triplex*.

---

[44]Alvin Plantinga seems to have coined these terms as a way of framing the debate over Christ's human nature. See Alvin Plantinga, "On Heresy, Mind, and Truth," *Faith and Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (April 1999): 182-93. See also the discussion of these terms in Oliver D. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 34-71.

Christ's mediatorial role, as expressed in his three-fold office, places emphasis upon the unity of Chrit's two natures in the service of his redeeming work. As evidenced in his controversy with Stancaro, Calvin insisted that Christ carried out his mediatoral work through both natures. Christ is Mediator not merely as a man, because a mere man could not accomplish an infinite atonement. On the other hand, Christ is Mediator not merely as God, because a merely divine being could not serve as a suitable representative and substitute for human beings. All three of Christ's anointed offices are, therefore, dependent upon this two-natured Christology. Christ represents the elect as their revelatory prophet, their atoning and interceding priest, and their Davidic king. But only as God can he execute these offices in a salvifically effectual manner.

So what does all of this have to do with dyothelitsm? Applying Calvin's logic to Christ's volitional life, we may state the following: only a two-willed Christ can execute the three-fold office of the Mediator. Calvin hints at this position in the two explicit passages cited above. As Calvin argues in his commentary on the Gethsemane Narrative, Christ must obey the Father in order to accomplish salvation. So he "voluntarily" takes upon himself our infirmities and becomes obedient unto death. But, as Calvin argues in the *Institutes*, the "will or inclination to obey" is located in the human soul. Therefore, the Son must assume a human soul (and will) in order to function as humanity's representative. Of course, for Calvin, a human will alone is insufficient for the task of mediation. So Calvin also points out that, as God, Christ willed nothing different than the Father. The salvation of the elect accomplished through the atoning death of Christ, was the plan of the Son no less than the Father. Thus, both wills—both human and divine willing—are necessary for Christ's work of mediation. This principle applies to all three offices Christ executes as Mediator. Only a two-willed Christ could reveal, atone, and rule on behalf of human beings in such a way that God's will is accomplished through a perfected human will. In sum, only the God-Man, who both

wills and acts as God and wills and act as man can serve as an adequate Mediator—the Prophet, Priest, and King of God's chosen people.

The *Extra Calvinisticum*. Furthermore, a strong case can be made that the *extra Calvinisticum* implies the two-wills position as well. This implication is born out by the fact that many contemporary proponents of monothelitism seem to have difficultly affirming the *extra*. As we saw in chapter 2, contemporary monothelites (especially those who espouse kenoticism) tend to deny, redefine, or else lack a Christological mechanism by which to affirm the *extra*. In Gerald Hawthorne's words, the idea that the Son retained and exercised his divine attributes in the incarnation is "de facto Docetic[ism]."[45] In place of this "dual existence" view of the incarnation, Hawthorne and other kenoticists maintain that monothelitism better guards the unity of Christ's person and the limitations he placed upon himself in the incarnation.

But the connection can be seen on the other side of the debate as well. The *extra* was defended by Calvin and the Reformed tradition in the context of debate over divine omnipresence vis-à-vis Christ's exalted humanity. The Reformed argued that it is inappropriate and unnecessary to ascribe ubiquity to Christ's human, because the Son of God as such is not limited to his humanity. By virtue of his two natures, the incarnate Christ is simultaneously omnipresent (*qua* divine) and spatially located (*qua* human). But the *extra* has implications beyond omnipresence. The *extra* maintains that by virtue of his divinity, the Son retained the full possession and exercise of his divine attributes even in his incarnate state. That is not to say that his humanity possessed these attributes; such was the mistake of the Lutheran *genus maiestaticum*. Instead, the person of Son continued to possess and exercise his divine attributes *insofar as he remained God the Son*. Thus, the Son was not limited to his human attributes even in his state of

---

[45]Gerald Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus* (Dallas: Word, 1991), 205.

humiliation. Mysteriously, the incarnate Christ retained the full range of his divine attributes, while at the same time taking upon himself the genuine limitations of human existence. For the Reformed tradition, the *extra Calvinisticum* simply expresses the Chalcedonian distinction of Christ's two natures.

Dyothelitism fits hand in glove with this understanding of the *extra Calvinisticum*. How so? We may state the matter as follows: the two-wills position provides a theological mechanism by which we can understand the two seemingly contradictory aspects of the Son's incarnate life. In and through his divine will, the Son continues to carry out his divine functions as the Second Person of the Godhead: upholding the universe by the Word of his power (Heb 1:3), holding together all of created reality (Col 1:17), and acting with divine power and authority (Mark 4:41; Luke 5:20-21; 7:48-49). Because he shares in the one divine nature, the Son wills nothing other than what the Father and Spirit will. But in and through his human will, the Son experiences life as a finite human being. Because of his human will, the Son is able to render perfect obedience unto God as the Last Adam, the substitute and representative of God's people. But he is also susceptible to ordinary, non-sinful, human volitional conflict. As Calvin argues in the two passages examined above, only the Son's assumption of a human will can account for the volitional tension he experiences in Gethsemane. Christ's human will is perfectly conformed to the divine will, but not without a genuine struggle against temptation. Calvin quotes Hebrews 5:8 in this context: "Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered."[46] Dyothelitism can account for this struggle in a way that monothelitism cannot. If the Son has only one will and has contracted himself, so to speak, to the human will of Christ,

---

[46]Though he arrives at different conclusions on Christology than those offered here (specifically, he espouses a form of functional kenoticism), Bruce Ware provides a largely helpful discussion of what it means for the Son to "learn obedience through what he suffered" (Heb 5:8). See Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus*, 59-72.

then any tension we see in his state of humiliation introduces a volitional rift in the Godhead itself. Whereas in a dyothelite scheme, the volitional unity of the Godhead is preserved and space is created for a genuine volitional tension to be experienced by Christ's life by virtue of the human will he assumed in the incarnation.

Chalcedonian definitions. Finally, Calvin's understanding of the classic Christological terms also buttresses his dyothelite position. For Calvin, a person is a subsistence in a nature.[47] The person is the "somebody" who exists in the nature. Accordingly, the nature is the "stuff" that makes the person who he is. For Calvin, and the Chalcedonian tradition more broadly, a *human* nature consists of a body and a rational soul. Furthermore, for Calvin, the human soul consists of not only the attributes that make up the individual and but also the psychological (mind) and volitional (will) equipage that enable him to act as a human agent. Therefore, the human will inheres in the human soul, which along with the human body comprises a concrete human nature. So in the incarnation, the Son assumed a concrete human nature—a human body and human soul (including a human will), and he did so without surrendering his divine nature (including the divine will). Thus, by the two-natures-one-person logic of Chalcedon, the hypostatically singular Son possesses two wills corresponding to his two natures. In short, Calvin's understanding of the Chaledonian terms, "person" and "nature," make him definitionally a dyothelite.

The Covenantal Christ: John Gill's Dyothelite Christology

Perhaps the inclusion of the Particular Baptist John Gill (1697-1771) in a discussion of Reformed Christology deserves some *apologia*, and this for several reasons. First, Gill is relatively unknown. Despite his remarkable influence among Particular

[47]Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.13.6.

Baptists in his own day, Gill has received relatively short shrift in more recent literature.[48] One happy exception to this dearth of Gill scholarship is Michael Haykin's edited volume, *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697-1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation*.[49] Additionally, there are some signs that point to a renewed interest in Gill, not only among Baptist historians but also in the broader scholarly world. Reformed historian Richard Muller makes frequent use of Gill's works in his four-volume treatment of *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*.[50] Biblical scholar Dale Allison sees Gill's commentaries as a valuable exegetical resource in his project of recovering the history of interpretation.[51] So, Gill's inclusion here is intended, in part, to advance this scholarly interest in his theology. But Gill is also included because of the representative nature of his Christological approach. In many ways, Gill provides a theological harvest of the period of Post-Reformation Reformed Orthodoxy (despite his rejection of infant baptism and his hyper-Calvinistic tendencies, both of which will be discussed below). Muller summarizes Gill's theological approach as follows:

> The theology of John Gill represents the remnants of the older scholasticism in its clear and consistent reference to the major Reformed thinkers of the seventeenth century and in its efforts to maintain an exegetical continuity with the older tradition. Indeed, Gill's primary dialogue partners in his work of biblical interpretation and theological construction are the orthodox of the seventeenth century rather than his own contemporaries.[52]

---

[48]Michael Haykin points out that answers to pressing questions about Gill's theology "are not easy to find, since little of substance has really been written on him." Michael A. G. Haykin, ed., *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697-1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

[49]Ibid. See also the treatments of Gill in Thomas J. Nettles, *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity*, vol. 1, *Beginnings in Britain* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2005), 195-242; and Robert W. Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists, 1771-1892: From John Gill to C. H. Spurgeon* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2006), 3-15.

[50]Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987-2003).

[51]See the many citations of Gill in Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

[52]Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 3:150.

Gill's theology was more exegetical and traditional than it was philosophical. But his approach to the monothelite controversy will serve as a useful example of how the matter was treated in the Post-Reformation era more broadly.

Second, Gill was a Particular Baptist and did not adhere to a Reformed confession, narrowly construed. But as was argued in the introduction, we can conceive of the Reformed tradition in narrower and broader terms. In the narrowest sense, it is true that Gill did not adhere to the dominant Reformed confession of his day: the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF). He and his church did, however, subscribe to a strict form of Calvinism, which they inherited from the Particular Baptists of the 17th century. With some notable exceptions, Gill's Calvinism stood in broad continuity with the Baptist revision of the WCF, the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (SLBCF).[53] This confession, drafted in 1677 and published the year after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, reflects a Baptist version of the Calvinistic federal theology, which was common to British evangelicals in the last half of the sixteenth century.[54] To be sure, the SLBCF revised, replaced, and expanded upon some important points in the WCF, but the critical mass of Calvinistic and covenantal theology remained intact.[55] So, in a broader sense, there is little reason to exclude Gill from the category of "Reformed theologians," especially when it comes to Reformed Christology, over which there was virtually no

---

[53]For more on the SLBCF, see Michael A. G. Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys, and Keach: Rediscovering Our English Baptist Heritage* (Leeds: Carey, 1996), 62-81. Gill critiqued the Confession on some important points, especially related to the justification and the free offer of the gospel. For more on Gill's modifications of the Baptist Confession, see Robert W. Oliver, "John Gill (1697-1771): His Life and Ministry," in *The Life and Thought of John Gill*, ed. Haykin, 19-20.

[54]In a show of Protestant unity, the British Congregationalists had already offered their own revision to the WCF in the 1658 Savoy Declaration.

[55]For an extended study of the main covenantal differences between the Presbyterians and the Baptists, see Pascal Denault, *The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology: A Comparison between Seventeenth-Century Particular Baptist and Paedobaptist Federalism*, trans. Mac Wigfield & Elizabeth Wigfield (Birmingham: Solid Ground, 2013). For a discussion of the differences between the WCF and the SLBCF, see Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys, and Keach*, 71-81. See also James Anderson's tabular comparison of the WCF, the SD, and the SLBCF, http://www.proginosko.com/docs/wcf_sdfo_lbcf.html, accessed 30 October 2013.

disagreement between orthodox Presbyterians and Baptists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Muller's conclusion is apt:

> The eminent Particular Baptist preacher, theologian, and exegete, John Gill (1697-1771), stands as proof, if any were needed, that the thought of English nonconformity and, within that category, English Baptist theology, is in large part an intellectual and spiritual descendant of the thought of those Reformers, Protestant orthodox writers, and Puritans who belonged to the Reformed confessional tradition. This must be acknowledged despite the pointed disagreement between Baptists and the Reformed confessional tradition over the doctrine of infant baptism; this one doctrine aside, their theology is primarily Reformed and what disagreements remain are disagreements with and often within the Reformed tradition rather than indications of reliance on another theological or confessional model.[56]

According Muller, Gill's theology should be considered Reformed and not merely "Calvinist" or "Calvinian," as if there were a sharp theological fissure between the Reformer and the subsequent Reformed tradition. Gill's theology is dependent upon his sustained interaction with and development of the Reformed theologies of the seventeenth century, but, as we will see, his understanding of the incarnation and of the relevant biblical texts related to dyothelitism are remarkably similar to Calvin.

A final reason Gill may seem like an unlikely candidate to serve as a representative Reformed theologian is found in his theological idiosyncrasies, especially in his hyper-Calvinistic tendencies. It is clear enough that Gill espoused some form of eternal justification.[57] Gill has also been charged with rejecting so-called "duty faith" (that is, the duty of all human beings—elect and reprobate—to believe in Christ) and the "well-meant offer" of the gospel. But there is some disagreement among scholars over the accuracy of these charges.[58] In any event, Gill's beliefs on the extent of the offer of the gospel do not necessarily impinge upon his Christology more generally nor his

---

[56]Richard A. Muller, "John Gill and the Reformed Tradition: A Study in the Reception of Protestant Orthodoxy in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Life and Thought of John Gill: A Tercentennial Appreciation*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 51.

[57]John Gill, *Body of Doctrinal Divinity* (London: M. & S. Higham, 1839; repr., Paris, AR: Baptist Standard Bearer, 1984), 203-209.

[58]For a helpful summary of the relevant literature on this debate, see Haykin's introduction in Haykin, *The Life and Thought of John Gill*, 1-6.

dyothelitism more specifically. Therefore, no attempt will be made either to accuse or excuse Gill on these hyper-Calvinistic charges. His Christology is, in a sense, insulated from these more problematic aspects of his theology.

Gill's Christology

In the few works devoted to Gill's theology, relatively little space is devoted to his Christology. Gill's views on Scripture, exegesis, the Trinity, soteriology, and ecclesiology receive the bulk of attention, but there is a sense in which Christology is the centerpiece of his entire theology. Space does not permit a full treatment of Gill's Christology here, but a few remarks will prepare us for Gill's clear affirmation of dyothelitism. First, it should be noted that Gill's Christology, like Calvin's before him, is primarily biblical. Gill is less interested in Aristotelian distinctions and more concerned with biblical exegesis. A quick perusal of his *Body of Divinity* bears this out. Scriptural proofs dot virtually every paragraph in his treatment of Christ's person and work.

Second, Gill's Christology, also like Calvin's, is tilted toward soteriology. The person of Christ is expounded in order to make sense of the redeeming work of Christ. To be more specific, we may summarize Gill's Christology as covenantal. Gill spends five chapters in Book II of his *Body of Doctrinal Divinity* in order to explain Christ's relation to the eternal covenant of grace entered into by the Divine Persons for the redemption of the elect. In Gill's Christology, Christ is the "head," "mediator," "surety," and "testator" of the covenant of grace. When Gill comes to his more formal treatment of Christology in Book V, he likewise explains Christ's person in relation his role as the Mediator. Gill expounds the incarnation as follows:

> And the incarnation of the Word or Son of God, is expressed and explained by his partaking of flesh and blood; and by a taking on him the nature of man; or by an assumption of the human nature into union with his divine Person; so that both natures, divine and human, are united in one Person; and there is but one Lord, and

one Mediator between God and man.[59]

Thus, for Gill, the incarnation is predicated upon the eternal covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son, and it services the Son's mediatorial mission on behalf of the elect.

Third, Gill's Christology is deeply traditional. There are few, if any, innovations in his approach to the central questions of the incarnation. In this, Gill serves as a helpful representative of the Reformed orthodox era. One of the central concerns of Protestant orthodoxy was a faithful rendition of the great Trinitarian and Christological consensus of the patristic era.[60] The Protestant Scholastics vehemently opposed the theology of the heterodox Socinians, who rejected these cardinal Christian doctrines.[61] By Gill's time, there were battles to be fought within the non-conformist churches themselves, as increasing numbers of Presbyterians and (mostly General) Baptists defected to Unitarianism.[62] Gill stood as a stalwart against these developments. His orthodoxy is as apparent in his Christology as anywhere else in his theological system. Gill affirmed, with Chalcedon, that Christ assumed a real body (against the Docetists) and a reasonable soul (against the Apollinarians).

> Had he not an human soul, he would not be a perfect man; and could not be called, as he is, the man Christ Jesus: the integral parts of man, and which constitute one, are soul and body; and without which he cannot be called a man.[63]

---

[59]Gill, *Body of Doctrinal Divinity*, 383.

[60]This is not to suggest that there were no fresh perspectives offered on traditional doctrinal positions during the period of Reformed orthodoxy. John Owen's own version of Spirit Christology stands out as an intriguing development within seventeenth-century Reformed Christology. But on the major Christological issues, the Reformed orthodox were just that: orthodox. They sought to defend the classic Trinitarian and Christological positions of the great Christian tradition. For more on Owen's Spirit Christology, see Oliver D. Crisp, *Revisioning Christology: Theology in the Reformed Tradition* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2011), 91-109.

[61]For a helpful summary of Socinianism, see Nettles, *The Baptists*, 1:106.

[62]For more on the rise of Unitarianism among the dissenters, see Timothy George, "John Gill," in *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, ed. Timothy George and David S. Dockery (Nashville: B&H, 2001), 19-20.

[63]Gill, *Body of Doctrinal Divinity*, 382.

On the hypostatic union, Gill closely echoes the language of Chalcedon:

> But this union of natures is such, that though they are closely united, and not divided, yet they retain their distinct properties and operations; as the divine nature to be uncreated, infinite, omnipresent, impassible, &c. the human nature to be created, finite, in some certain place, passible &c. at least the latter, before the resurrection of Christ.[64]

Gill also affirms Christ's assumption of an anhypostatic human nature and disavows any form of Nestorianism: "It was a nature, and not a person, that Christ assumed so early as at its conception."[65] He argues for the classic understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum* against the Lutheran *genus maiestaticum*: "This an union of natures; but not a communication of one nature to another; not of the divine nature, and the essential properties of it, to the human nature."[66] Further,

> [T]he properties of each nature . . . are, in common, predicated of the Person of Christ, by virtue of the union of natures in it; for though each nature retains its peculiar properties, and does not communicate them to each other; yet they may be predicated of the Person of Christ: yea, he may be denominated in one nature, from a property which belongs to another; thus in his divine nature he is God, the Son of God, the Lord of glory; and yet in this nature is described by a property which belongs to the human nature, which is to be passible, and suffer.[67]

In sum, Gill's treatment of the incarnation is firmly rooted in patristic orthodoxy and faithfully articulates the classic Reformed position on the person of Christ. So it should come as no surprise that Gill is reliably conservative in his discussion of dyothelitism as well.

Gill's Dyothelitism

Gill addresses the issue of dyothelitism in several places, both in his commentaries and in his *Body of Doctrinal Divinity*. We will examine each in turn,

---

[64]Ibid., 383.

[65]Ibid., 385.

[66]Ibid.

[67]Ibid., 386. Thus, Gill affirms the fuller, traditional meaning of the *communicatio idiomatum*, which Calvin had contracted to this last, "improper" form of predication.

beginning with the *Body of Doctrinal Divinity*.[68]

Dyothelitism in Gill's *Body of Doctrinal Divinity*. In his discussion of Christ's human soul, Gill states the following,

> But that he is possessed of an human soul, is evident from his having an human understanding, will, and affections; he had an human understanding, knowledge, and wisdom, in which he is said to grow, and which in some ways were deficient and imperfect (Luke 2:52; Mark 13:32). He had an human will, distinct from the divine will, though not opposite, but in subjection to it (Luke 6:38; Luke 22:42). And he had human affections, as love (Mark 10:21; John 13:23). And joy (Luke 10:21). Yea, even those infirmities, though singles passions, prove the truth of his human soul; as sorrow, grief, anger, amazement, and consternation (Matthew 26:38; Mark 3:5; 14:33).[69]

Notice that Gill, in line with the broader dyothelite tradition, defines a human soul in terms of mind, will, and affections. The will inheres in the soul, which, in turn, inheres in human nature. So, when Christ assumed a human nature, he assumed a human soul, and therefore a human mind and will. In this way, Gill is a classic dyothelite: for him, wills belong to natures, not persons, and therefore a two-natured Christ must possess two wills. Like Calvin, it appears that Gill is assuming a version of concretism: Christ did not merely take to his person certain abstract properties that made his volitional life possible; he assumed a concrete human soul, complete with a human mind and a human will.

But notice also that Gill's dyothelitism serves an explanatory role in his understanding of Christ's genuine humanity. Like Calvin, Gill believes that the Son's assumption of a human mind and will creates space for Christ's genuine ignorance, growth, and temptation as a human being. Christ possesses a human will that is ontologically distinct from the divine will and is, therefore, capable of existing in tension with the divine will. But, like Maximus and the entire dyothelite tradition, Gill is quick

---

[68]I am grateful to my friend and colleague at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Steven Godet, for helping me locate these references in Gill's corpus. Godet's own dissertation on the doctrine of the Trinity in Gill's theology is forthcoming.

[69]Gill, *Body of Doctrinal Divinity*, 382.

to point out that Christ's human will is not "opposite, but in subjection" to the divine will. So there is a functional unity of Christ's two wills despite their ontological distinction.

Furthermore, Christ's human submission to the divine will is a necessary component of his redeeming work. Later in Book V, Gill addresses the active obedience of Christ in his state of humiliation (chap. 3). Gill adopts the classic Reformed categories of Christ's active and passive obedience, with the former referring to Christ's life of law-keeping obedience and the latter to his sufferings and atoning death. These two distinct but inseparable aspects of Christ's obedience comprise his saving work, which he came to accomplish in his state of humiliation. It is in his discussion of Christ's active obedience that he once again turns his attention to Christ's human will. According to Gill, Christ's active obedience refers to "his obedience to God, through the whole course of his life" and includes his sinless life of representative, law-fulfilling obedience to the Father.[70] Gill argues that in order for Christ to render this perfect obedience to the moral law, he must possess certain qualifications. Among other prerequisites, Gill argues that Christ's obedience to the moral law requires his possession of "a power of free will to that which is holy, just, and good, agreeable to the law of God." He explains this point further:

> In the state of innocence the will of man was free to that which is good only: in man fallen, his will is only free to that which is evil: in a man regenerate, there being two principles in him, there is a will to that which is good, and a will to that which is evil; so that he cannot do oftentimes what he would: but the human will of Christ was entirely free to that which is good; and as he had a will and power to do, so he always did the things which pleased his Father.[71]

Gill is employing Augustine's well-known fourfold state of human freedom. J. I. Packer explains these distinctions as follows:

> Augustine first schemed out the fourfold state of humans as freedom in Eden to sin (Lat. *posse peccare*), no freedom in our fallenness not to sin (*non posse non*

---

[70]Gill, *Body of Doctrinal Divinity*, 396

[71]Gill, *Body of Doctrinal Divinity*, 399.

peccare), partial freedom in the present life of grace not to sin (*posse non peccare*), and full bestowal in the future life of glory of inability to sin (*non posse peccare*).[72]

In Augustine's own words, these four stages describe the "successive temporal epochs" of redemptive history: "The first is before the law, the second is under the law, the third is under grace, and the fourth is in full and perfect peace."[73] Gill employs these Augustinian categories in order to argue for a particular kind of freedom that Christ must posses in order to render obedience to the moral law of God. It seems that Gill is arguing for the Adamic, unfallen state of freedom in Christ's human will—a will that was "entirely free to that which is good."[74] So, in order for Christ to render perfect obedience to God, he must assume not merely a human will but also a human will possessing a certain kind of freedom. This passage reveals much about Gill's understanding of the sort of human nature Christ assumed (namely, an unfallen human nature) and the reality of Christ's impeccability, but it also demonstrates once again that Gill is a dyothelite. Gill affirms Christ's two wills in no small part due to his understanding of salvation: Christ had to assume a free human will in order to accomplish redemption through his obedience to the law of God.[75]

Dyothelitism in Gill's commentaries. Before Gill wrote his systematic theology (*Body of Doctrinal Divinity*) and his practical theology (*Body of Practical Divinity*), he penned a massive commentary on every verse of every book in the Bible. At several points in his biblical commentary, Gill makes it clear that he believes

---

[72]J. I. Packer, "Free Will," in *The Westminster Handbook of Reformed Theology*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 86.

[73]St. Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*, ed. Thomas S. Hibbs (Washington, DC: Regnery, 1996), 137.

[74]However, it is possible that he is arguing for the final state of freedom. Either way, Gill is clearly denying Christ's assumption of a fallen human will.

[75]It is fascinating to note that T. F. Torrance's version of dytoetheltism argues precisely the opposite, namely, that Christ assumed a fallen human will in order to bend humanity's corrupt will back to God. Torrance will be discussed in more detail below.

dyothelitism is born out by the biblical text. The most obvious place to begin is with Gill's discussion of the Gethsemane Narrative. Commenting on Matthew 26:39, Gill writes,

> That there are two wills in Christ, human and divine, is certain; his human will, though in some instances, as in this, may have been different from the divine will, yet not contrary to it; and his divine will is always the same with his Father's. This, as mediator, he engaged to do, and came down from heaven for that purpose, took delight in doing it, and has completely finished it.[76]

This passage is remarkably Calvinian. Like Calvin, Gill brings an important assumption to the table when interpreting the Gethsemane Narrative. He assumes, based on prior Trinitarian beliefs, that the divine will is singular: "his divine will is always the same with his Father's." With this assumption in place, a dyothelite interpretation of Gethsemane seems self-evident to Gill: "That there are two wills in Christ, human and divine, is certain." Once again, dyothelitism is brought in to help explain the apparent tension between Christ's will and the Father's. There is a volitional difference without a volitional contradiction. Also like Calvin, Gill understands dyothelitism as a function of Christ's role as the Mediator. It was Christ's purpose and delight to accomplish the Father's will in his mediatorial mission.

Gill also affirms dyothelitism in his commentary on Luke's version of the Gethsemane Narrative. Commenting on the concessive phrase, "Nevertheless not my will," Gill argues that Christ utters this statement "as man, for Christ had an human will distinct from, though not contrary to his divine will."[77] Gill reads the Father's will in this passage as a metonymy for the singular divine will, which is shared by the Son no less than the Father. So the tension must arise the human will which Christ assumed in the incarnation. Once again, Gill affirms an ontological distinction but functional unity of

---

[76]See Gill's commentary on Matt 26:39. John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments* (London: Mathews & Leigh, 1810; repr., Paris, AR: Baptist Standard Bearer, 1989), 7:334-35.

[77]Gill, *An Exposition*, 7:710.

Christ's two wills: they are distinct but not in contradiction.

In addition to the Gethsemane Narrative, Gill also provides a dyothelite interpretation of John 6:38, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me." Commenting on this verse, Gill writes,

> It is readily granted that they are not one and the same person; they are two distinct persons, which sending, and being sent, do clearly show; but then they are one in nature, though distinct in person, and they agree in will and work. Christ came not to do any will of his own different from that of his Father's; nor do these words imply a difference of wills in them, much less a contrariety in them, but rather the sameness of them.[78]

Gills seems to perceive the same potential difficulty in this passage that Gregory of Nazianzen detected, namely, it appears that Christ's will is eternally distinguished from the Father's in this verse. Thus, Gill feels the need to defend the volitional unity of the divine persons. His answer is similar to Gregory's: so far from establishing some personal distinction between the will of the Father and the will of the Son, the rhetorical upshot of Jesus' words here is precisely to affirm the unity of the divine will. The Son did not come to accomplish a purpose different than the Father's; instead their wills, even if spoken of separately, are essentially one. In Gill's words, "[N]or do these words imply a difference of wills in them, much less a contrariety in them, but rather the sameness of them." The personal relations[79] in the immanent Trinity are volitionally one.

Gill was not alone among his fellow Particular Baptists when it came to dyothelite interpretations of Scripture. John Brine, for example, one of Gill's London Baptist contemporaries echoed the same arguments as Gill when it came to Christ's two wills. Though Brine was a noted hyper-Calvinist, his understanding of Christology on

---

[78]Gill, *An Exposition*, 7:817.

[79]It is important to note that Gill affirms classic Trinitarianism. The three divine persons are relations in the one divine essence which are to be distinguished from one another only by virtue of their distinct personal properties. Unlike modern Trinitarianism, Gill does not define the three persons as distinct psychological and volitional subjects. For more on the differences between classic Trinitarianism and the twentieth century Trinitarian "revivals," see Stephen R. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History, and Modernity* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012).

this point was classically Reformed. In a sermon on the Proverbs 8:22-23 titled, "The Proper Eternity of the Divine Decrees, and the Mediatorial Office of Jesus Christ: Asserted and Proved," Brine writes,

> The human Nature of Christ being united unto his divine Person, these two Things follow upon it. As Man he was at the Disposal of his divine Will. As God, or a divine Person, he had absolute Power over his human Nature, which was a constituent Part of himself, as Mediator, and, therefore, he had full and proper Right, to covenant and agree, that his human Nature should both obey and die, in Obedience unto the Will of the Father. For, that Nature was his *own* in a *peculiar* Sense, and it was fit, that it should be absolutely at the Disposal of his divine Will. His Assumption of it into Union with himself was with a View, that it might so be. And our blessed Lord clearly expresses the Right of his divine Person to dispose of his human Nature, according unto his own absolute Pleasure, in these Words: *No man taketh my Life from me*; *I lay it down of myself*; *I have Power to take it again*. *This Commandment have I received of my Father*. The Glory of Christ as Man is unequalled, in Consequence, of his personal, Union with the eternal Son of God: But this Union is so far from raising his human Nature, above an absolute Subjection unto his divine Will, that it necessarily infers it: Or the absolute Subjection of his human Will, unto his divine Will, necessarily follows upon it. His Engagement, therefore, as a divine Person, in the everlasting Covenant, brought an Obligation upon him, as Man, to do and suffer all, that was included in that federal Engagement of his, though his human Nature was not then existent.
>
> When the blessed Jesus had Subsistence as Man, his human Will, which is absolutely distinct from his Will, as God, was wholly under the Direction and Influence of his divine Will. And it was fit, that it should so be, for it would have been the highest Incongruity, if the human Will of Christ had not been under the determining Influence of the Will of his divine Person. Hence it was impossible, that the Will of Christ, as Man, should in any Instance, or at any Time, clash with his divine Will. And it is hence also, that the holy moral Operations of the human Nature of Christ, are to be esteemed the Acts of his Person, as Mediator, and that they become infinitely *meritorious*: Because they are the Acts of his Person, who is God as well as Man, though the human Nature only, is the immediate Subject from which they spring; therefore, infinite Merit attends them.[80]

Again, in a sermon on 2 Corinthians 5:21, titled the "Doctrines of the Imputation of Sin to Christ, and the Imputation of his Righteousness to his People: Clearly Stated, Explained, and Improved," Brine wrote,

> The human nature of Christ hath its Subsistence in his Divine Person. That Individum of our Nature which was miraculously produced by the Power of the Holy Ghost, the Son of God took into a personal Union with himself. He assumed it

[80]John Brine, "The Proper Eternity of the Divine Decrees and of the Mediatorial Office of Jesus Christ: Asserted and Proved," http://www.mountzionpbc.org/John_Brine/JB_Sermon_19.htm. Accessed February 24, 2014.

> to be his *own* in a *peculiar* Manner, that it might be at his Disposal, and always under the Direction of his divine Will. The human Will, and the divine Will of our Savior are, and eternally will be distinct; but his Will as Man is in absolute Subjection to, and in all Instances, acts under the Direction of his divine Will. And, therefore, it is not possible that he should ever know Sin. Moral evil can never take place in a Nature which is ineffably united with the Person of the Son of God.[81]

Perhaps what is so remarkable about the dyothelitism of the Baptists Gill and Brine is just how consistent it is with the categories of Calvin himself and the subsequent period of Reformed orthodoxy. Gill and Brine affirm the two wills of Christ based upon a traditional understanding of the Chalcedonian terms vis-à-vis the will: wills belong to natures, not persons. They are motivated in their dyothelitism not only by convictions about the meaning of Holy Scripture, but also by dogmatic considerations regarding the Trinity (especially the unity of the divine will) and soteriology (only a two-willed Christ is adequately equipped to serve as the Mediator). In all of these ways, Gill and Brine were classically Reformed in their defense of a dyothelite understanding of the incarnation.

The Traducian Christ: William G. T. Shedd's Dyothelite Christology

In many ways, William Greenough Thayer Shedd (1820-1894) was a faithful purveyor of Reformed orthodoxy in his own 19th century American context. But two distinctive elements of his theology demonstrate the uniqueness of his theological contribution, namely, his espousal of Augustinian realism with regard to the transmission of original sin and his affirmation of traducianism with regard to the transmission of the soul. The rigor with which Shedd applies these distinctives to his Christology makes his defense of dyothelitism a unique contribution in the Reformed tradition. Our discussion of Shedd will proceed in three steps. First, we will summarize Shedd's two distinctive

---

[81]John Brine, "Doctrines of the Imputation of Sin to Christ, and the Imputation of his Righteousness to his People: Clearly Stated, Explained, and Improved," http://www.mountzionpbc.org/John_Brine/Imputation%20%20By%20John%20Brine.htm. Accessed February 24, 2014.

doctrines: realism and traducianism. Second, we will explore how these two emphases are applid Shedd's Christology. Finally, we will examine Shedd's discussion of dyothelitism in his magum opus, *Dogmatic Theology*, and seek to show how his version of dyothelitism fits within his larger theological program.

Shedd's Realism and Traducianism

The standard Reformed story of how Adam's sin became the sin of all humanity is often described under the rubric "federal headship." According to this view, God has constituted Adam as the federal (that is, covenantal) representative of the human race. Whatever Adam chooses in the face of his probationary test (will he eat of the forbidden fruit?) affects his progeny, not merely in a generative sense (they inherit his corrupt nature) but more fundamentally in a forensic sense (his sin and guilt are legally imputed to them). The Baptist Catechism, echoing the Westminster Shorter Catechism, offers a standard treatment of this issue:

> 19. Q. Did all mankind fall in Adam's transgression? A. The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression (Gen. 2:16, 17; Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22).
>
> 20. Q. Into what estate did the fall bring mankind? A. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery (Rom. 5:12).
>
> 21. Q. Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell? A. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it (Rom. 5:12, to the end; Eph. 2:1, 2, 3; James 1:14, 15; Mt. 15:19). [82]

Gill spells out this position further in his discussion of Adam and Christ as the two federal heads of humanity:

> The federal headship of Christ, may be argued and concluded from Adam being a federal head and representative of all his natural offspring; in which he was "the figure of him that was to come", that is, Christ; for it was in that chiefly, if not

[82]"The Baptist Catechism," questions 19-21, in Tom J. Nettles, *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life* (Amityville, NY: Calvary, 1998).

> solely, that he was a figure of Christ; at least, that is the chief, if not the only thing the apostle has in view, (Rom. 5:14) as appears by his running the parallel between them, as heads and representatives of their respective offspring: Adam, through his fall, conveying sin and death to all his natural descendants; and Christ, through the free gift of himself, communicating grace, righteousness, and life to all his spiritual seed, the elect, the children his Father gave him: and hence these two are spoken of as the first and last Adam, and the first and second man; as if they were the only two men in the world, being the representatives of each of their seeds, which are included in them (1 Cor. 15:45, 47).[83]

Natural or ordinary generation is important. It prevents this covenantal arrangement from being arbitrary. But the decisive reality is the federal and forensic union of Adam and his posterity in the mind of God. Inherited corruption is grounded in imputed guilt.[84]

The realist scheme approaches the matter of original from a different vantage point. Finding its roots in the theology of Augustine, realism conceives of humanity as a united whole in the first man. Oliver Crisp explains: "The central Augustinian realist notion [is] that Adam and his progeny are somehow metaphysically united so that original sin may be justly transmitted from Adam to his posterity."[85] In Augustine's own words, all human beings after Adam derive from his first transgression "the seed of death" and a "vitiated nature."[86] This is so because all humanity was in seminally present in Adam in his first sin:

> For God, the author of natures, not of vices, created man upright; but man, being of his own will corrupted, and justly condemned, begot corrupted and condemned children. For we all were in that one man, since we all were that one man, who fell into sin by the woman who was made from him before the sin. For not yet was the particular form created and distributed to us, in which we as individuals were to live, but already the seminal nature was there from which we were to be propagated; and this being vitiated by sin, and bound by the chain of death, and justly condemned, man could not be born of man in any other state. And thus, from the bad use of free will, there originated the whole train of evil, which, with its concatenation of miseries, convoys the human race from its depraved origin, as from

---

[83]Gill, *Body of Doctrinal Divinity*, 229.

[84]The classic treatment of this Reformed doctrine in the twentieth century is John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1959).

[85]Oliver D. Crisp, "Original Sin and Atonement," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, ed. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 438.

[86]Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Random House, 1999), 13. The references for this work are to the chapter numbers, not the page numbers.

> a corrupt root, on to the destruction of the second death, which has no end, those only being excepted who are freed by the grace of God.[87]

Augustine understands human nature to be an undifferentiated whole in Adam. As successful generations are born, this universal human nature is particularized and distributed in individual human beings. But the whole, and therefore the "seminal nature" inherited by all of the subsequent parts, was really present in Adam in his first sin. On the basis of this metaphysical unity, then, Augustine argues that Adam's sin is justly transmitted to his posterity.

Shedd reiterates this basic realist scheme in his own theology of original sin. For Shedd, it is not enough to claim that Adam was our federal representative; the more fundamental truth is that all of humanity was really present in Adam when he fell. According to Shedd, the first sin of Adam was twofold: the internal inclination to disobey (which is the principal part) and the external exertion of that sinful inclination.[88] Shedd maintains that when Adam sinned in this twofold manner, all of humanity sinned in him. "This first sin in both of its parts, internal and external, is imputed to Adam and his posterity as sin and guilt because they committed it."[89] Shedd finds biblical evidence for this position in Romans 5:12-19, which he spends several pages expounding. Crucial for Shedd's interpretation of passage is the distinct kinds of union Adam and Christ share with their respective peoples. For Christ, the union he shares with his people is "spiritual and mystical" and "representative." But the union of Adam and his posterity is "natural"; it is "a union of constitutional nature and substance." So the fundamental relation between Adam and his posterity is not one of federal representation but of natural unity. On this point, Shedd follows Augustine: "The entire human species as an invisible but

---

[87]Augustine, *City of God*, 14.

[88]William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 3rd ed., ed. Alan W Gomes (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003), 550-51.

[89]Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 557.

substantial nature acts in and with the first human pair."[90]

Closely related to Shedd's realism is his traducian understanding of the transmission of the human soul. Regarding the human soul, the majority report in the Reformed tradition is decidedly creationist.[91] In the creationist account, though an individual's body is generated in a mediate fashion, through the sexual union of his parents, the individual's soul is created immediately by God. Creationists find scriptural warrant for their position in passages such as Zechariah 12:1 ("who . . . formed the spirit of man within him") and Hebrews 12:9 ("the Father of spirits"). This creation-from-nothing view is explicitly rejected by Shedd. In its place, Shedd argues for traducianism (from the Latin, *traductio*, "transmission" or "transfer"), which maintains that the soul is transmitted along with body in natural generation. Shedd defines the traducian view as follows:

> Traducianism applies the idea of species to both body and soul. Upon the sixth day, God created two human individuals one male and one female, and in them also created the specific psychico-physical nature from which all the subsequent individuals of the human family are procreated both psychically and physically.[92]

Shedd contrasts this position with creationism, which "confines the idea of species to the body." The creationist maintains that

> God on the sixth day created two human individuals, one male and one female, and in them also created the specific physical nature from which the bodies of all the subsequent individuals were procreated, the soul in each instance being a new creation *ex nihilo* and infused into the propogated body.[93]

Shedd defends traducianism against creationism on biblical and theological

---

[90]Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 562.

[91]Though there are some notable exceptions. Shedd is perhaps foremost among them. For more on the history and theology of both creationism and traducianism, see Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 580-88.

[92]Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 431.

[93]Ibid., 432.

grounds.[94] Among other scriptural passages, Shedd points to Hebrews 7:10 (which speaks of Levi being "in the loins of his father" Abraham, when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek) as support for his traducian position. He also points out the apparent inconsistency of the creationist position with the creation rest of God in Genesis 2:1-3. Shedd argues, "If the human soul has been a creation *ex nihilo*, daily and hourly, ever since Adam and Eve were created on the sixth day, it could be said that 'on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made.'"[95]

Shedd also offers a series of theological arguments in favor of traducianism. Here, Shedd explicitly connects his traducianism with his realism. "The imputation of the first sin of Adam to all his posterity as a culpable act is best explained and defended upon the traducian basis."[96] For Shedd, realism demands traducianism and traducianism helps to elucidate realism.[97] The problem with the federal headship view, according to Shedd, is that it has difficulties explaining the justice of imputing Adam's sin to those who had no real participation in it. In the realist scheme, as we have seen, all of humanity is seminally present in Adam in his first sin. Therefore, when Adam sins, all of his posterity sins, because they are actually present in him as a species, if not as individuals. "Participation is the ground of merited imputation," as Shedd puts it. Thus, realism provides a safer basis for the justice of original sin because it avoids the charge of legal fiction, which attends the federal headship view. Traducianism helps to explain realism because it shows how the sin of Adam spreads to his posterity:

Human nature existing primarily as a unity in Adam and Eve and this same human

---

[94]Shedd also makes a series of physiological arguments in favor traducianism. See Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 465-72.

[95]Ibid., 442.

[96]Ibid., 444.

[97]Oliver Crisp attempts to demonstrate how one can maintain realism without traducianism in Oliver D. Crisp, "Scholastic Theology, Augustinian Realism and Original Guilt," *European Journal of Theology* 13, no. 1 (2004): 17-28.

> nature as subsequently distributed and metamorphosed into the millions of individual men are two modes of the same thing.[98]

In other words, realism and traducianism are two sides of the same coin. All of humanity was metaphysically present in Adam when he sinned. Therefore, when Adam's nature is corrupted by sin, so is the whole of human nature. This now-vitiated human nature is then distributed through propagation, such that all of humanity—in both body and soul—inherit the original corruption of Adam. We might say that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. Any bit that is pinched off of the lump, so to speak, carries with it the stain of sin, which was present in the original whole. Thus, realism and traducianism form a united pair of doctrinal heads in Shedd's theology. Shedd's Christological idiosyncrasies come to the fore when he attempts to apply these doctrines to the incarnation.

Shedd's Christology

In many ways, Shedd's Christology is consistently traditional. Shedd situates the incarnation in a traditional understanding of the Trinity, arguing that only the Second Person becomes incarnate and that his incarnation involves no substantive changes in the Trinity. Shedd clearly espouses the two-natures-one-person doctrine of Chalcedon.[99] He affirms the classic *anhypostasia-enhypostasia* distinction, the Virgin Birth, the Reformed (and catholic) understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum*, and, especially important for our purposes, the conciliar position on Christ's two wills.[100]

However, Shedd's commitment to realism and traducianism does produce

---

[98]Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 444. Interestingly, Shedd believes the Westminster Standards are on his side in this debate, a claim that other Reformed theologians would reject. Shedd himself mentions the alternative interpretation of Charles Hodge (453).

[99]Although technically three "natures" are involved in Shedd's Christology. Shedd speaks of the humanity of Christ in terms of two natures: his human body and his human soul. But even here, Shedd's idiosyncrasy is semantic, not substantive. For more on this front, see Oliver D. Crisp, *Revisioning Christology: Theology in the Reformed Christology* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2011), 71.

[100]In addition to a close reading of Shedd, much of this section is dependent upon Crisp, *Revisioning Christology*, 69-90. See also Oliver D. Crisp, *An American Augustinian: Sin and Salvation in the Dogmatic Theology of William G. T. Shedd* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), esp. 56-74.

some interesting and unique effects in his Christology. According to Shedd, despite the miraculous circumstances of Christ's virginal conception, his soul was produced in a traducian manner, no less than the rest of humanity. He writes,

> Although the human nature of Christ was individualized and personalized by a miraculous conception and not by ordinary generation, yet this was really and truly a conception and birth as if it had been by ordinary generation. Jesus Christ was really and truly the Son of Mary. He was bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh. He was of her substance and of her blood. He was consubstantial with her, in as full a sense as an ordinary child is consubstantial with an ordinary mother. And she was the mother of his human soul, as well as of his human body.[101]

Shedd maintains that "the body and soul of Christ were formed simultaneously and by one act of the Holy Spirit out of the psychico-phsyical substance of the mother."[102] He understands this position to be in direct opposition to creationism, which maintains that "only the body was formed out of the virgin's merely physical substance, the soul being subsequently created *ex nihilo* and infused into the body."[103] As Oliver Crisp points out, Shedd does not balk at applying his traducianism consistently to Christ's human nature.[104]

But given the close relation of traducianism and realism in Shedd's theology, an obvious problem arises: if Christ's human nature, including his human soul, is derivative of the metaphysically united human nature which was corrupted in Adam's Fall, then how can Christ's human nature be preserved from original sin?[105] On this

---

[101]Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 639.

[102]Ibid., 638.

[103]Ibid., 638-39.

[104]Crisp, *Revisioning Christology*, 89.

[105]Crisp points out another problem with Shedd's traducianism more generally, namely, the "exotic metaphysics" that it seems to require. "Human natures are concrete particulars comprising a body and a distinct soul, and yet they are somehow both present in the parents of the individual in question, prior to being conceived." But can souls generate other souls in the same way that bodies can be reproduced? Further, is it true, even with regard to the body, to say that my human body, say, was present physically in Adam's body? Certainly not on a cellular level. These and other metaphysical problems lead Crisp to reject Shedd's traducianism, though he retains a version of his realism. Crisp, *Revisioning Christology*, 85-86.

account, it would seem that Christ possesses a "fallen" human nature. But such a view would run counter to the traditional Reformed understanding of fallenness as a culpable moral state.[106] We shall have more to say about the question of Christ's human nature vis-à-vis "fallenness" when we discuss T. F. Torrance below, but for now it is important to note that Shedd does not wish to affirm the fallenness of Christ's human nature. Shedd is aware of Edward Irving's view that Christ did indeed possess a fallen human nature. Irving maintained that Christ was, nevertheless, preserved from sin, not by virtue of the hypostatic union or his virginal conception, but by virtue of the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Irving believes that this view allows for the possibility that Christ should experience every temptation that sinful humans face.[107] But Shedd rejects this position because it "implies that corruption of nature is not sin."[108] Furthermore, it confuses the work of the Holy Spirit in Christ's conception with something analogous to regeneration and indwelling in ordinary believers. Shedd is unwilling to accept the conclusion that his traducianism leads to a fallen human nature understanding of the incarnation. He recognizes this problem as the first of the "principal objections" raised against traducianism.[109]

So how does Shedd avoid such a conclusion? It is at this point that Shedd introduces what is perhaps the most peculiar aspect of his Christology, namely, his view that Christ's human nature must be both justified and sanctified in order to be suited for personal union with the divine Son. According to Shedd, the New Testament plainly teaches the sanctification of Christ's human nature.

> The Scriptures teach that the human nature of our Lord was perfectly sanctified in and by his conception by the Holy Spirit. Sanctification implies tha the nature

---

[106]Crisp, *Revisioning Christology*, 83.

[107]Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 638.

[108]Ibid.

[109]Ibid., 475.

> needed sanctification. Had Christ been born of Mary's substance in an ordinary manner, he would have been a sinful man. His humanity prior to conception was an unindividualized part of the common human nature. . . . [His human nature] is denominated "sinful flesh" in Rom. 8:3. It required perfect sanctification before it could be assumed into union with the second trinitarian person, and it obtained it through the miraculous conception.[110]

Interestingly, he extends this logic beyond sanctification to justification.

> Theologians have confined their attention mainly to the sanctification of Christ's human nature, saying little about its justification. But a complete Christology must include the latter as well as the former. Any nature that requires sanctification requires justification, because sin is guilt as well as pollution. The Logos could not unite with a human nature taken from the virgin Mary and transmitted from Adam unless it had previously been delivered from both the condemnation and the corruption of sin.[111]

Shedd finds scriptural support for his position in 1 Timothy 3:16, which speaks of Christ being "justified by the Spirit." He also cites Augustine and Athanasius as ancient supporters of this doctrine.[112] Shedd even grounds this unique instance of justification in Christ's own atoning death. The justification of Christ's human nature "like that of the Old Testament believers, was proleptic, in view of the future atoning death of Christ."[113]

But surely such a view faces extreme difficulties on an orthodox understanding of Christ's sinlessness. Crisp poses the right question: how can Christ's human nature be both "the means and the object of salvation"?[114] How can Christ redeem sinners from the curse of sin and death when he's own human nature requires that same salvation? Shedd's position would seem to threaten the entire argument of the author of Hebrews with regard to the superiority of Christ's priesthood:

> For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. (Heb

---

[110]Ibid., 475.

[111]Ibid.

[112]Ibid., 476.

[113]Ibid.

[114]Crisp, *Revisioning Christology*, 85.

7:26-27).

Furthermore, the "justification" of Christ spoken of in 1 Timothy 3:16 concerns the vindication of Christ as righteous in his resurrection, not some in some proleptic justification of the otherwise-guilty human nature assumed by the Son in Mary's womb.[115] In any event, Shedd's position that Christ's human nature needs salvation is, to say the least, rather odd in the broader Reformed tradition. Still, something like Shedd's position seems necessary if the peculiarities of traducianism are to be consistently applied to the human nature of Christ.[116]

Shedd's Dyothelitsm

Shedd's dyothelitism is not entirely dependent upon his realism and traducianism, but the latter pair of doctrines do add some shades to his presentation of dyothelitism that make it unique. Shedd devotes an entire section to the two wills of Christ at the end of his chapter on "Christ's Unipersonality." Shedd states his position

---

[115]Note the close parallels between this hymnic passage and the prologue of Romans, where the vindication of the Spirit is explicitly connected with the resurrection. For a helpful commentary on this verse, see George William Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 184-85.

[116]So it seems that there are good Christological reasons for rejecting Shedd's traducianism. Interestingly, John Gill argues against traducianism on precisely these Christological grounds. Gill argues that the incarnation precludes traducianism for two reasons. First, if the soul is transmitted through the sexual union of the parents, then how could Jesus possess a soul, since he had only a mother and no earthly father? Second, if his soul derives from Mary alone, then how could Christ be protected from original sin since "she, being a sinful woman, it must have been infected and defiled with the contagion of sin, the corruption of nature; whereas he was holy and harmless, without spot and blemish." Gill, *Body of Doctrinal Divinity*, 272. Someone might respond to Gill's first objection by arguing that God specially created the male genetic material necessary for Jesus' conception in Mary's womb. If this were the case, then Jesus' conception would be a kind of hybrid between creationism and traducianism. It would be creationist insofar as part of Jesus' human nature (namely, the "father's" genetic material) was created from nothing by God. But it would be traducian from that point forward: Jesus' soul was generated along with his body in the combination of Mary's genetic material with this created-from-nothing male genetic material. This version of traducianism vis-à-vis Christ's soul might explain the sinlessness of Christ in a more satisfying way than Shedd's view, in which Jesus' human nature must be proleptically justified and sanctified. In a creationist-traducian hybrid model, we might say that Jesus' human nature was preserved sinless by virtue of the fact that one half of the genetic material was created from nothing by God. Still, we would have to explain how Mary's fallen genetic material wouldn't "taint" the human nature thus produced. Some in the Christian tradition have suggested that original sin passes from one generation to the next only through the male partner, but such a view has little biblical warrant.

plainly:

> The doctrine of the two natures implies the doctrine of two wills in Christ. Either nature would be incomplete and defective without the voluntary quality of property in it. Each nature, in order to be whole and entire, must have all of its essential elements. A human nature without voluntariness would be as defective as it would be without rationality.[117]

Here, Shedd assumes the basic dyothelite logic. Wills belongs to natures, not persons. Therefore, since Christ is two-natured, he must be two-willed. It is important to note that Shedd's realism and traducianism do not alter this basic dyothelite assumption. The great Princetonian Charles Hodge notes regarding realists,

> Realists believe that generic humanity, *although intelligent and voluntary*, is impersonal, existing personally only in individual men. Although realism may not be a correct philosophy, the fact of its wide and long continued prevalence may be taken as proof that it does not involve any palpable contradiction. Human nature, therefore, although *endowed with intelligence and will*, may be, and in fact is, in the person of Christ impersonal. That it is so is the plain doctrine of Scripture, for the Son of God, a divine person, assumed a perfect human nature, and nevertheless remains one person.[118]

General human nature does not lack volition and intelligence, waiting for this endowment only at the point of individuation in distinct persons. Instead, even on the realist scheme, mind and will belong to human nature, not human persons.

We might think that the realist position would conclude otherwise. Since they place emphasis upon "human nature," in general, rather than "human natures," in particular, we might presume that realists would adopt a kind of "abstract human nature" view of the incarnation. That is, we might presume that realists believe that human nature is a general property (or set of properties), which the Son took to himself in the incarnation. But Shedd is no abstractist; he is decidedly concretist in his understanding of Christ's human nature. Though the human nature of Christ, when considered apart from the incarnation, is *anhypostatic* and is only personalized in relation to the hypostasis

---

[117]Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 657.

[118]Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1940), 2:391, cited in Crisp, *Revisioning Christology*, 69. Emphasis added.

of the Son (*enhypostasis*), Christ' human nature itself is comprised of a concrete body and a soul. Shedd makes this point clear: "A human person has two natures, namely, a material body and an immaterial soul."[119] Shedd's idiosyncratic use of the word "nature" to describe both the body and the soul has already been noted above. But this usage simply underscores the present point, namely, that Shedd sees these two parts of human nature as distinct, concrete substances, not merely as abstract properties. Thus, Shedd argues that "the proper statement is that the Logos untied himself with a human nature, not with the human nature."[120] Shedd's traducianism only strengthens this position. If the human soul, no less than the human body, is passed down through natural generation, then it is difficult to conceive how it could be merely a set of properties. Traducianism seems to imply that the soul is a concrete particular, just as the body is.

Still, it does seem that Shedd's concretism exists in tension with his realistic understanding of human nature as a united, metaphysical whole, which is only individualized in discrete hypostatizations. Crisp makes precisely this point: "Shedd's claim that human natures are not distinguishable one from another seems to conflict with what he says about the human nature of Christ consisting of a human body and human soul [i.e., his concretist understanding of Christ's human nature]."[121] When Shedd affirms both the indistinguishability of human nature, on the one hand, and the concreteness of Christ's human nature, on the other, it seems that he is caught on the horns of a dilemma. Crisp concludes that Shedd is "just confused in this matter."[122]

Perhaps Shedd's traducianism can come to his aid in this apparent

---

[119]Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 617. Shedd's idiosyncratic use of the word "nature" to describe both the body and the soul has already been noted above. But this usage simply underscores the present point, namely, that Shedd's sees these two parts of human nature as concrete

[120]Ibid., 633.

[121]Crisp, *Revisioning Christology*, 86.

[122]Ibid., 87.

contradiction. Perhaps Shedd could say that human nature is itself a concrete particular that is individualized into further concrete particulars with each successive generation. We could say that human nature in Adam is like a lump of clay, and each successive generation is a smaller piece of clay broken off from the whole.[123] In this scenario, each successive piece broken off from the lump is constitutionally the same; it is made up of the same "stuff." But the pieces themselves are distinct. If this accurately reflects Shedd's traducianism, then there is a sense in which human natures are indistinguishable. They are made up of the same stuff—the same essential properties. But there is another sense in which they are distinguishable. Suppose a piece, *A*, of human nature, *N*, is broken off of *N* at time, t_1, and individualized in person, P_1. Then suppose another piece, *B*, is broken off of *N* at time, t_2, and individualized in person P_2. In this case, both *A* and *B* are constitutionally the same; they are both made up of *N*. But they are distinct at least in the sense that they were broken off at different times and are individualized in different persons. Additionally, perhaps we could say that *A* and *B* can be mapped onto different "places" on the surface of *N*. So, *A* and *B* can be distinguished in several ways even if there is one important sense in which they cannot be distinguished (they share the common properties of *N*). In any event, there is a certain ambiguity in Shedd's thinking on this matter, which would need to be clarified for Shedd to reconcile his realism with his concretism.

Still, it is clear enough that Shedd espouses concretism and thus affirms a concrete human will in the human soul of Christ. For Shedd, Christ is a single "self-consciousness" who possesses a twofold "consciousness." After a discussion of the *communicatio idiomatum*, Shedd writes, "In accordance with this complex constitution of

---

[123]Indeed, this is close to what Shedd argues, which Crisp acknowledges: "An individual man is a fractional part of human nature separated from the common mass and constituted a particular person having all the essential properties of human nature." Shedd even uses the metaphor of clay. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 470.

Christ's person, we find that his consciousness, as expressed in language, is sometimes divine and sometimes human." Yet is the same person who possesses these two modes of consciousness. The human mode of consciousness is *anhypostatic* until united to the person of the Son, but even in union with the Son, the consciousness of the human nature remains distinct from the Son's divine consciousness. The same self-conscious person, then, possesses two consciousnesses.[124] Because Shedd sees mind and will as inseparable aspects of the human soul, he applies the same twofold logic to the volitional life of the incarnate Christ.

> We have already observed that the personalizing of the human nature by its union with the Logos is seen in the fact that the activities of the human nature appear as factors in the single self-consciousness of the God-man. He is conscious of finite inclination and finite volitions; this proves that there is voluntariness in the human nature that has been individualized.

Thus, Shedd holds together the Son's unity of volition in his person, or self-consciousness, while recognizing that the unique human experiences of the Son are only possible because he has taken to himself a distinct volitional capacity in his incarnation: a human will.[125]

A final passage from Shedd serves as a good summary of how his dyothelitism fits within his broader realist/traducian Christology:

> These two elements or properties of human nature, the rational and the voluntary, are no longer dormant, as they are in all nonindividualized human nature, but are active and effective in the one self-conscious person Jesus Christ.

Shedd's realism is evident here. Human nature is conceived of as a united, unindividualized whole. And in this united whole, the properties of mind and will lie dormant until they are individualized by discrete persons. At that point, the latent

---

[124]We could even say that the person of the Son possesses two minds. But Shedd's concretist approach should not be confused with Thomas Morris's abstractist "two minds" proposal. See Thoams V. Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001).

[125]Shedd's dyothelitism also grounds his own particular approach to Christ's impeccability. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 330-49. See the discussion of Shedd in Bruce Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 75-77.

rational and volitional properties become concrete in the particular soul of the individual. It seems that, for Shedd, there is a sense in which every human nature is anhypostatic, because human nature itself is anhypostatic until individualized in distinct persons. So, for Shedd, the fact that the will inheres in the nature in no way threatens the unity of Christ's person. The volitional capacities of human nature are only concretized, so to speak, when they are united to an individual person—in the case of the incarnation, to the single self-conscious person of the Son. Therefore, it seems that Nestorianism is ruled out by Shedd's anthropology no less than his Christology. Given his understanding of the unity of human nature, it is simply not possible for the volitional capacity of human nature to become concretized except as it is individualized in a person. Thus, Shedd's realism/traducianism equips him with a mechanism by which he can affirm the distinction of Christ's two wills without surrendering the unity of his person.[126]

The Fallen Christ: T. F. Torrance's Dyothelite Christology

Thomas Forsyth Torrance (1913-2007) is widely recognized as one of the most important British theologians of the twentieth century.[127] His work on theology and science has been especially well-received.[128] His sacramental theology is considered by

---

[126]This is not to say that Shedd's realism/traducianism ought to be adopted. There are good biblical and theological reasons to question the viability of Shedd's position. Nor is it to say that only Shedd's version of dyothelitism can avoid the heresy of Nestorianism. A proponent of creationism can just as easily affirm the anhypostatic nature of Christ's human will as well as the unity of Christ's person. But in the case of creationism, the incarnation is more of a special case: in the case of the incarnation, the components which would normally comprise a discrete human person—a concrete body and soul—are prevented from doing so because of their assumption by the person of the Son. See Brian Leftow, "A Timeless God Incarnate," in *The Incarnation*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[127]Torrance biographer Alister McGrath considers Torrance "one of the most productive, creative, and important theologians of the twentieth century." Alister E. McGrath, *Thomas F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), xi. For more superlative assessments of Torrance's work, see the citations in Paul D. Molnar, *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009), 1-2.

[128]One of the most important of Torrance's works in this vein is his *Reality and Scientific Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001 [1982]). For more on the scientific theology of Torrance, see

some to be epochal in its significance.[129] His three volumes on the Trinity, published in retirement, continue to be the subject of academic study.[130] Perhaps one of Torrance's most lasting contributions is his editorial oversight, along with G. W. Bromiley, of the English translation of Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*. Several themes and "centers" have been proposed with regard to Torrance's theology, but a strong case can be made that no other doctrine is more central to his thought than Christology.[131] Many of Torrance's earlier works were taken up with Christological themes, but two volumes published posthumously provide an excellent summary of the doctrine that was central to his teaching ministry at the University of Edinburgh. [132] Based on his lectures at New College from 1952 to 1978, these two volumes are a boon to Christian theologians seeking to understand the distinctive Christological contribution of Torrance.

This section will proceed in two steps. First, we will briefly summarize two themes in Torrances's Christology that have particular significance for his defense of dyothelitism: his understanding of the saving significance of the whole life of Christ, his

---

P. Mark Achtemeier, "Natural Science and Christian Faith in the Thought of T. F. Torrance," in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T. F. Torrance*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 71-91.

[129]For example, see George Hunsinger, "The Dimension of Depth: Thomas F. Torrance on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper," in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T. F. Torrance*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 139-60. See also Robert J. Stamps, *The Sacrament of the Word Made Flesh: The Eucharistic Theology of Thomas F. Torrance* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2007).

[130]Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being, Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996); idem., *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994); idem., *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988).

[131]Along with, of course, its concomitant: the doctrine of the Trinity. Still, Torrance's theology, much like Barth's, bears a distinct Christocentrism. For an insightful treatment of Torrance's major themes, see Myk Habets, *Theology in Transposition: A Constructive Appraisal of T. F. Torrance* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013). Habets suggests that Christology forms the center of [Torrance's] entire theology on the foundation of the doctrine of the Trinity" (2).

[132]Thomas F. Torrance, *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008); idem., *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009).

affirmation of the fallenness of Christ's human nature, and his employment of the anhypostasia/enhypostasia distinction. Second, we will examine Torrance's affirmation of dyothelitism, showing how it fits into his broader Christology.

Torrance's Christology

The thoroughness with which Torrance weaves his Christology into the whole fabric of his theological program makes an adequate summary of his Christology well beyond the scope of this section. Instead, we will focus our attention on three themes that bear especially upon Torrance's understanding of dyothelitism.

The whole life of Christ. For Torrance, Christ's saving work cannot be limited to his death and resurrection; it also includes the incarnation itself and the whole life of obedience rendered by Christ unto God on behalf of fallen humanity. Torrance utilizes the classic Reformed categories of the active and passive obedience of Christ in order to make this point:

> By *active obedience* is meant the positive fulfillment of God's saving will in the whole life of Jesus in his sonship. . . . By *passive obedience* is meant the submission of Jesus Christ to the judgement of the Father upon the sin which he assumed in our humanity in order to bear it in our name and on our behalf. . . . This distinction between the active and passive obedience of Christ has been emphasized in Reformed theology not in order to distinguish or separate them, but in order to insist that the whole course of Christ's obedience is absolutely integral to his work of reconciliation, and that atonement cannot be limited to his passive obedience.[133]

Torrance was hardly the first Reformed theologian to emphasize the saving significance of the whole life of Christ. The emphasis was already present in Calvin, who wrote, in a passage Torrance was found of quoting,

> Now someone asks, How has Christ abolished sin, banished the separation between us and God, and acquired righteousness to render God favorable and kindly toward us? To this we can in general reply that he has achieved this for us by the whole course of his obedience. This is proved by Paul's testimony: "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience we are made righteous" [Rom. 5:19 p.]. In another passage, to be sure, Paul extends the oasis of

[133]Torrance, *Incarnation*, 80-81, emphasis original.

> the pardon that frees us from the curse of the law to the whole life of Christ: "But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law, to redeem those who were under the law" [Gal. 4:4-5]. Thus in his very baptism, also, he asserted that he fulfilled a part of righteousness in obediently carrying out his Father's commandment [Matt. 3:15]. In short, from the time when he took on the form of a servant, he began to pay the price of liberation in order to redeem us.[134]

Closer to Torrance's own day, Karl Barth also emphasized the reconciling effects of Christ's incarnation,

> To bring about this conversion [of the world] He really took the place of man. And He did not take the place of this man as God but as man: "to fulfill all righteousness," to do right at that very place where man had done wrong, and in that way to make peace with man, to the triumph of His faithfulness, to His own magnifying in creation and by the creature. The Word became flesh that there might be judgement of sin in the flesh and the resurrection of the flesh.[135]

Torrance builds upon and amplifies this Reformed emphasis. Taking his cues from Calvin, Torrance argues that atonement language should not be restricted to the death of Christ. Instead, the person and work of Christ should be drawn together in a much closer fashion than is often the case. According to Torrance, the hypostatic union is a dynamic union that can only be understood in terms of Christ's work of reconciliation. Torrance sees his Christological project as bringing together "the patristic emphasis on the *being*-of-God-in-his-acts and the Reformation emphasis on the *acts*-of-God-in-his-being."[136]

One of the ways that Torrance spells out this emphasis on the whole life of Christ is his doctrine of Christ's vicarious humanity. According to Torrance, "in Christ's humanity there took place a vicarious sanctification of our human nature and lifting of it up again into fellowship with God."[137] For Torrance, the incarnation serves more than an

---

[134]Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.16.5.

[135]Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 4/1:237.

[136]Torrance, *Incarnation*, 85, emphasis original. Torrance believes this this project necessitates a rethinking of the ontology of God's acts in space and time.

[137]Torrance, *Incarnation*, 205.

"instrumental role" in his atoning work.[138] He understands the hypostatic union to be "one long act of atoning and sanctifying reconciliation." By taking our common humanity, Christ has already begun his reconciling work.[139]

Fallen flesh. Closely related to Torrance's doctrine of Christ's vicarious humanity is his doctrine of Christ's fallen flesh. Like Edward Irving his 19th century Scottish predecessor and Karl Barth his 20th century contemporary, Torrance maintains that Christ assumed a fallen human nature.[140] It was neither a sin to do so nor did it issue forth in any actual sin on the part of Christ. Nevertheless, the Son's assumption of fallen flesh was necessary for his work of reconciliation. Torrance states his case plainly,

> There can be no doubt that the New Testament speaks of the flesh of Jesus as the concrete form of our human nature marked by Adam's fall, the human nature which seen from the cross is at enmity with God and needs to be reconciled to God. In becoming flesh the Word penetrated into hostile territory, into our human alienation and estrangement from God.[141]

Torrance is remarkably close to Barth on this point:

---

[138]Molnar, *Theologian of the Trinity*, 119.

[139]One question that arises with regard to vicarious humanity is related to its scope: if Christ has assumed our common humanity and this assumption is already a reconciling act, then are we left with some form of universalism, by which all humanity is reconciled simply by virtue of the incarnation? The same question is often raised with regard to Karl Barth, whose doctrines of universal atonement and universal election/reprobation in Christ seem to imply universalism. For Torrance's part, he addresses the question head on: "In the face of this it is utterly inconceivable to us that anyone, man or woman, should finally reject the saving love of God incarnated in Jesus and enacted in his vicarious and substitutionary death on the cross—yet that is incomprehensibly what can and does take place—an utterly irrational event which we can only leave to the Lord God himself in his infinite mercy and judgement." Torrance, *Incarnation*, 114.

[140]For a recent critique of the fallen human nature view, see Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, 90-117. For a recent defense of the fallen human nature view, see Marilyn McCord Adams, *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). In Adams' view, Christ must participate in the horrors of fallen human experience in order to accomplish his soteriological task of reorienting fallen humanity to God and the world around us. Adams even admits that her view involves Jesus in sin vis-à-vis his humanity: "The result is that we do not need to take on a commitment to Christ's utter human sinlessness. We are free instead to admit that Jesus had to outgrow parochial racism under the tutelage of the Canaanite/Syrophoenician woman (Matthew 15:21-28/Mark 7:24-30) and to acknowledge that He might have been harsh with his blood relatives!" See p. 79.

[141]Torrance, *Incarnation*, 61.

> There must be no weakening or obscuring of the saving truth that the nature which God assumed in Christ is identical with our nature as we see it in the light of Fall. If it were otherwise, how could Christ be really like us? What concern would we have with him? We stand before God characterized by the Fall. God's Son not only assumed our nature but he entered the concrete form of our nature, under which we stand before God as men damned and lost.[142]

Note that for both Torrance and Barth, the human nature that the Son assumed was a concrete reality, not merely an abstract property. However, for both Torrance and Barth, this concrete human nature was a fallen human nature. In this scheme, Christ must assume fallen flesh in order to sanctify it and "bend it back" to God. So Christ's humanity—indeed, his fallen humanity—is a necessary prerequisite for his saving work no less than his divinity. Torrance even appeals to Gregory's axiom to defend his position: "[I]f Christ did not assume our fallen flesh, our fallen humanity, then our fallen humanity is untouched by his work—for 'the unassumed is the unredeemed,' as Gregory Nazianzen put it."[143]

Shedd's realistic/traducian understanding of Christ's human nature stared this possibility in the face, but backed away from embracing it outright. Shedd opted instead for a fairly idiosyncratic understanding of the proleptic justification and sanctification of Christ's human nature on the basis of Christ's then-future work of atonement. Torrance's position is simpler. Like Irving, he argues for the sanctification of Christ's fallen flesh by virtue of the hypostatic union itself. "However, while we must say all that about the flesh that the Word assumed [that it was fallen], we must also say that in the very act of assuming our flesh the Word sanctified and hallowed it."[144] This sanctification then continues throughout the life of Christ as he lives a sinless life in and through our fallen humanity. The "atoning exchange begins right away with the incarnation" but it continues throughout the whole life of Christ: "Although the Son enters into the

---

[142]Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 1/2:153.

[143]Torrance, *Incarnation*, 62.

[144]Ibid., 63.

resistance and hostility of our flesh against God, he does not resist God but throughout the whole course of his life is obedient and true and faithful."[145]

So what should we make of this fallen human nature (FHN) position?[146] There is much to commend here, at least in terms of the position's motivation. Certainly all orthodox Christians want to maintain the real and meaningful incarnation of the Son of God. He was indeed "made like his brothers in every respect." He assumed a concrete human nature—body and soul—so that we might have a genuine "concern" with him, to echo Barth. Likewise, we also want to affirm that the Divine Son assumed all that it means to be human so that he might heal and redeem all of our nature—body and soul. Gregory's maxim holds true: if Christ only assumed, say, a human body, then our fallen human souls would be left to perish.

Nevertheless, there are several significant problems with the FHN view. First, it tends to neglect the fact that fallenness is not intrinsic to humanity. Fallenness is a not a "part" of humanity that must be healed. It is a condition of moral corruption and a propensity toward sin. All that is required for the Son's genuine incarnation and his representative work on our behalf is the assumption of a *full* human nature (body and soul), not a *fallen* human nature. Adam was fully human prior to his fall into sin. And Christ is fully human even though he does not possess the corruption of other human beings. Torrance's application of Gregory's axiom to a moral condition would seem to be a category mistake.

Second, the FHN view assumes that one can be in a state of fallenness and not be sinful. But this assumption is far from self-evident. Indeed, the mainstream Reformed understanding of original sin argues precisely the opposite: to possess a fallen nature is to

---

[145]Ibid., 63, 64.

[146]A version of the following remarks originally appeared at The Gospel Coalition blog. http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/tgc/2012/12/19/you-asked-did-jesus-assume-a-fallen-human-nature/, accessed December 4, 2013.

be guilty before God. Indeed, humanity's guilt in Adam is logically prior to the corruption they inherit from him. In other words, no one possesses a fallen human nature who is not also guilty before God. Even if we could conceive of a scenario in which someone could be fallen but not guilty, it is difficult to see how even this state of fallenness is not morally repugnant to God. Presumably "fallenness" in this context means possessing a propensity toward sin, even if no actual sin is committed. But how could a human being in this state not be condemnable in the eyes of a holy God?[147]

Third, the FHN view would seem to pose serious challenges to the historic understanding of the person of Christ. According to the "Definition" issued at the Council of Chalcedon, there are two distinct but inseparable natures (divine and human) *hypostatically* (that is, personally) united in the one Person of the Son. But how could the infallible Son of God be joined to a morally fallen human nature? Would this not call into question the Divine Son's impeccability, that is, his inability to commit sin? Or would one need to posit two persons in Christ, and hence the heresy of Nestorianism, in order to preserve both the impeccability of the Son and the fallenness of Jesus Christ? These Christological conundrums can be avoided if we also avoid the FHN view.[148]

Finally, the FHN view seems to ignore the fact that we can affirm what might be called the *fallen experience* of Jesus without positing a *fallen nature* in him. To put it another way, Christ experienced the effects of the Fall even though his nature was not complicit in it. We are not to imagine that Christ blissfully waltzed through life untrammeled by the suffering, sorrows, and pains of fallen human experience. The Gospels present Jesus as one who becomes hungry, tired, thirsty, grief-stricken, and even morally tempted and vulnerable to conflicting desires (besides his wilderness temptations, we might also think of his struggle in Gethsemane). But none of this

---

[147]For more along these lines, see Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, 111-12.

[148]Ibid., 113-15.

requires his assumption of a fallen nature. No, Christ is in possession of an unfallen human nature, but during his state of humiliation he lived and moved and had his being in a fallen world. So even the Incarnate God was not immune from the horrors of fallen existence. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15). Furthermore, in his atoning death, the Son of God was legally reckoned "to be sin"—even though he himself was sinless—and thus died as our substitute and representative. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). So in the end, none of the Savior's glorious work is surrendered by rejecting the FHN view.

Despite its problems, the FHN view is intrinsic to Torrance's understanding of the person and work of Christ. As we will see, this distinctive of his Christology figures prominently in his understanding of Christ's two wills.

Anhypostasia/enhypostasia. The final component of Torrance's Christology that bears upon his defense of dyothelitism is his employment of the anhypostasia/enhypostasia distinction. According to this classic formulation, the human nature of Christ is "without a person" (*anhypostastic*) since it receives its personal existence only "in the person" of the Son (*enhypostatic*). Though the human nature of Christ is complete—fully equipped with a human body and a human soul—it is prevented from forming a distinct human person because of its personal union with the Son. As in Barth's Christology, the anhypostasia/enhypostasia distinction figures prominently in Torrance's Christology.[149] Torrance explains his understanding of *anhypostasis*:

> *Anhypostasia* asserts: because of the assumption of humanity by the Son, Christ's human nature has its existence only in union with God, in God's existence or personal mode of being (*hypostasis*). It does not possess it in and for itself—hence

[149]For more on Barth's use of these terms, see Paul Dafydd Jones, *The Humanity of Christ: Christology in Karl Barth's Christology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2008), 23-25.

an-hypostasis ("*not* person," *i.e.* no separate person).[150]

And he defines enhypostasis as follows:

> *Enhypostasis* asserts: because of the assumption of humanity by the Son, the human nature of Christ is given existence in the existence of God, and co-exists *in* the divine existence or mode of being (*hypostasis*)—hence *en-hypostasis* ("person *in*," that is, real human person in the person of the Son). This means that Jesus had a fully human mind, will, and body, and was in complete possession of all human faculties.[151]

For Torrance, this distinction explains both the distinct, concrete reality of Christ's humanity and, at the same, time its commonality with the rest of humanity. Anhypostasia emphasizes the latter, namely, Christ's oneness with all of humanity; and enhypostasis emphasizes the former, namely, his distinct existence as the man Christ Jesus:

> The *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* taken together tell us that the incarnation was the union of the Word of God with mankind in solidarity with all men and women; yet it was union with one man, or rather such a union with all humanity that it was achieved and wrought out in and through this one man, Jesus of Bethlehem and Nazareth for all men and women.[152]

Torrance even attempts to attribute certain aspects of the incarnation to one or the other of these two categories. Thus, he places the virgin birth under the rubric of *anhypostasis*, presumably since it emphasizes how the humanity of Christ is created only without forming a distinct person, and he places the ongoing incarnate life of Christ under the category of *enhypostasia*, since it emphasizes the whole life of Christ in personal union with the Son.[153] To be sure, Torrance does not wish to distinguish the two categories too sharply, and he certainly intends to hold them together in the single, dynamic union of the two natures in Christ's person. But taken together these categories do serve as an important explanatory tool for Torrance, as he seeks to make sense out of both the

---

[150]Torrance, *Incarnation*, 84.

[151]Ibid.

[152]Ibid., 230.

[153]Ibid., 104.

particularity and universality of the Son's incarnation.

These three themes—the whole life of Christ, the fallenness of Christ's human nature, and the anhypostasia/enhypostasia distinction—are central to Torrance's Christological program and figure prominently in his defense of a two-wills Christology.

Torrance's Dyothelitism

Torrance's defense of dyothelitism, then, is set within this broader Christological context. He understands Christ's salvific role to be the undoing of the fall from the inside out, so to speak. The Son assumes fallen flesh, sanctifies it by virtue of his personal union with it, and through it renders perfect obedience to God throughout the whole course of his life. The Son assumes an impersonal human nature, and thus solidarity with all mankind, even as he personalizes this human nature, and thus lives a genuinely human life in the concrete reality of our fallen existence. For Torrance, this understanding of Christ's incarnation and reconciling work demands dyothelitism. Several passages in his two volumes, *Incarnation* and *Atonement*, bear out these dyothelite implications.

In his discussion of the monothelite heresy, Torrance writes,

> [The condemnation of Constantinople III] was the condemnation of those who taught that in Christ there was only one will, and the affirmation that in Christ there was a human will as well as a divine will in the hypostatic union of the two natures in his one person. That was a very important step forward, for it laid the stress not only upon nature and upon duality in unity, but upon will and action in Christ as God and man. The possession of a human will means that Christ was subject to temptation as we are, but the human will belonged to the one person of God the Son.[154]

For Torrance, like Calvin before him, the Son's assumption of a human will opens up space for the genuine temptation of the incarnate Christ. Torrance makes this point more explicit: apart from the Son's assumption of a human will (indeed, a fallen human will, as we will see), "it is difficult to give the temptations of Christ their full place." We might

[154]Ibid., 212.

call this the *temptation problem* that monothelitism faces: if Christ merely possesses a divine will that inheres in his person, then how can he be touched with human weakness, human anguish, and human struggle in the face of temptation? An answer to this problem is necessary, for Torrance, not only because the Gospels present Jesus' temptations as genuine, but also because of the nature of Christ's saving work as a human. Christ's human obedience is as necessary for his saving work as his divine authority to save. Given monothelitism, "it is difficult therefore to give the human obedience of Christ, in struggle against the onslaught of evil and sin, its full and proper place in atoning reconciliation."[155]

It is as this point that Torrance inserts his "fallen flesh" understanding of Christ's human nature. In full context, Torrance argues,

> But again, unless we take seriously at this point the fact that Christ assumed our will, the will of estranged man in estranged adamic human nature, in order to suffer all its temptations and to resist them and condemn sin in our human nature, and then to bend the will of man back into oneness with the divine will, it is difficult to give the temptations of Christ their due place. It is difficult therefore to give the human obedience of Christ, in struggle against the onslaught of evil and sin, its full and proper place in atoning reconciliation. If Christ assumed neutral or perfect human nature, and assumed it into oneness with his own divine person who could not choose to sin any more than he could choose not to be God, then the humanity of Christ is merely instrumental in the hands of God. But if so, then salvation is only an act of God done upon us and for us, and not also a real human act done in our place and issuing out of our humanity.[156]

So, for Torrance, it is not enough to argue that Christ assumed a concrete human will. This, Torrance readily accepts, but he goes further. We also must argue that Christ assumed a fallen human will, through which he accomplishes his work of reconciliation. In a similar fashion to Barth (and in some ways similar to Maximus), Torrance argues that Christ undoes the effects of the fall at precisely the point where sin entered the world, namely, the volition of man. From within fallen humanity, the Son "bends back"

---

[155]Ibid..

[156]Ibid.

the will of man to the will of God. If Christ has not assumed our fallen will, then he has not entered into the concrete reality of our sin and thus cannot accomplish our redemption as representative man.

Torrance connects his understanding of dyothelitism not only to Christ's fallen flesh, but also more broadly to his emphasis on the saving significance of the whole life of Christ. Torrance faults Patristic Christology for "failing to adequately link up christology with the saving work of Jesus, and in failing to think incarnation and atonement sufficiently into each other." But he sees the dyothelite affirmation of Constantinople III as a welcome exception to this weakness. Torrance sees the condemnation of monothelitism as a "considerable advance, if only for the reason that it kept the door wide open for full consideration of the saving significance of the humanity of Christ in the whole course of his obedience to the Father." Christ assumed a fallen human will and rendered willing human obedience to the Father through it. In short, for Torrance, dyothelitism is not an optional doctrine—a mere Christological add-on necessitated by a particular reading of one scriptural proof-text. Instead, dyothelitism infuses the whole life of Christ with saving significance. It is necessary for his soteriological task of bending back the will of man to the will of God.

Torrance applies his understanding of Christ's vicarious humanity to his two-wills defense. He even speaks of Chirst's "vicarious penitence and sorrow for the sin of mankind." In this representative repentance, Christ's human will is prominent:

> In his incarnation Christ not only took upon himself our physical existence from God, but in taking it into himself he at the same time healed it, sanctified it, and changed it, bending our will back to agreement with the divine will, and bringing our human mind back into agreement with the divine mind—and so in the innermost being of the incarnate Son, throughout the whole course of his life, Jesus Christ converted the mind and will of estranged humanity back to the Father.[157]

Here we have both emphases brought together: Christ assumed our estranged human will

---

[157]Torrance, *Atonement*, 70.

and lives out willing obedience on our behalf throughout the whole course of his life. Some might object that the notion of repentance has no meaning for a sinless person. But Torrance is not surrendering the doctrine of sinlessness. He argues quite the opposite:

> [T]he great renewing and sanctifying of humanity before God . . . was fulfilled in the holiness of Jesus' life, in his perfect obedience to the Father, in the perfecting and offering to God of a human life and spirit in purity of trust and love and devotion, in the sanctity of prayer and praise and worship.[158]

Christ is the representative penitent, not because he needs repentance, but because he has identified with fallen humanity in his incarnation and has accomplished obedience from within our fallen experience.[159]

Torrance also connects his defense of dyothelitism to his understanding of the *anhypostasia*/*enhypostasia* distinction. Recall that, for Torrance, the doctrine of *enhypostasia* emphasizes the concrete human nature Christ assumed in the incarnation. He is not merely *man*, but *a* man. He assumed not merely human nature in general, but a human nature in particular. "This means that Jesus had a fully human mind, will, and body, and was in complete possession of all human faculties."[160] These human faculties in Christ do not comprise a distinct human person, as they normally would in a human nature not assumed by the Son of God. Hence, they are *anhypostatic*, when viewed in abstraction from the incarnation. But as they are assumed in the person of Christ, these faculties become personalized, with important implications for Christ's saving work as a human, which we have already seen. In sum, all three Christological themes examined above—the whole life of Christ, fallen flesh, and the *anhypostasia*/*enhypostasia* distinction—are brought to bear in Torrance's defense of the orthodox doctrine of Christ's two wills.

---

[158]Ibid., 70.

[159]In a similar vein, Torrance argues for Christ's vicarious faith. Torrance, *Atonement*, 71. For a recent study on the notion of Christ's representative faith, see R. Michael Allen, *The Christ's Faith: A Dogmatic Account* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2009).

[160]Torrance, *Incarnation*, 84.

Conclusion

From the Patristic and medieval eras, the Reformed tradition inherited a series of biblical and theological arguments in defense of dyothelitism. Reformed interpreters continued to read the Synoptists' Gethsemane Narrative and certain key passages in John's gospel in a dyothelite manner. With the broad dyothelite tradition, Reformed authors also emphasized the continuity of dyothelitism with the Chalcedonian Definition, the Trinitarian problems raised by a monothelite understanding of personhood, and the soteriological significance of Christ's two wills. Still, dyothelitism was refracted through the prism of Reformed Christology in some distinctive ways. We have examined four test cases, so to speak, of this uniquely Reformed version of dyothelitism. Though their Christologies differ in some interesting and important ways, the family resemblances should be apparent in the works of Calvin, Gill, Shedd, and Torrance. All four are working with the same basic Christological categories: the duality of Christ's natures, the singularity of his person, his role as Mediator, his threefold office, his two states, his active and passive righteousness, his federal headship as the Last Adam, and so forth. Still, each theologian presents his own unique defense of dyothelitism in a manner consistent with his own unique understanding of the person and work of Christ.

Calvin and Gill represent what we might call "mainstream Reformed dyothelitism." Calvin places special emphasis on Christ the Mediator, who fulfills the threefold office of prophet, priest and king as the God-Man. Calvin is consistently Chalcedonian and understands the traditional Christological terms through a Constantinopolitan (III) lens: wills belong to natures, not persons; therefore, Christ has two wills, not one. Calvin also maintains the traditional, so-called *extra Calvinisticum*, by which the Son loses none of his divine attributes or functions even in his incarnate state. For all of these reasons, Calvin maintains that a two-willed Christ is requisite for his work as the Mediator. The incarnate Christ wills and acts as God, via the *extra*, but he also wills and acts as man, in service of his representative and mediatorial role. Gill

echoes many of the same biblical and theological arguments of Calvin but in a more rigorous and thorough fashion. Gill traces not only the soteriological implications of dyothelitism but also the Trinitarian problems caused by monothelitism. If wills belong to persons and there are three persons in the Godhead, then are we left with three wills in the Trinity? Both Calvin and Gill assume the numerical singularity of the divine will and interpret the biblical data distinguishing the Father's will and the Son's will accordingly, namely, they locate the distinction in the human will that the Son assumed in the incarnation.

Shedd and Torrance represent minority approaches to Christology within the Reformed tradition, but their defenses of dyothelitism are in no way weakened as a result. Shedd attempts to apply his realism and traducianism to his Christology and situates his dyothelitism within this broader scheme. Christ's human nature, including his human will, was inherited from the human nature of Mary and is a part of the united whole of humanity, which was present originally in Adam. Still, Christ's human nature, when assumed into the person of the Son, becomes a concrete particular and possesses a distinct human will through which Christ renders perfect obedience to the Father. Even if Shedd's affirmation of concretism stands in some tension with his realistic understanding of human nature, it is important to note that he affirms a concrete human will in Christ nonetheless. This component of Reformed Christology seems nonnegotiable, given its importance for the Reformed understanding of Christ's representative and mediatorial work. Finally, Torrance defends dyothelitism as a necessary prerequisite for Christ's saving role as the one who assumes and sanctifies fallen humanity. Torrance places emphasis on the whole course of Christ's obedience, his assumption of fallen humanity, and his assumption of an *anhypostatic* human nature, to which he gives personhood in his own eternal Person. Dyothelitism is necessary because Christ must assume all that it means to be a fallen human being—including a concrete and fallen human will—in order

to bend the will of man back to the will of God.

It should be apparent that each of these defenses of dyothelitism involves a combined biblical and theological argument. These Reformed authors are dealing with scriptural as well as dogmatic considerations. Especially important, on the biblical front, is the Gethsemane Narrative. In terms of theology, our three dogmatic loci are once again prominent. The debate over the wills of Christ is not isolated. Instead, it is woven together with broader theological considerations, especially how one understands the issues surrounding the incarnation, the Trinity, and the soteriological task Christ came to accomplish. In the next chapter, we will bring these Reformed authors into dialogue with contemporary monothelitism and will seek to adjudicate which position offers a more biblically and theologically satisfying model of the incarnation.

CHAPTER 5

CONSTRUCTING A CONTEMPORARY DYOTHELITE CHRISTOLOGY

Introduction

In this final chapter, we bring our dialogue partners into conversation with one another. Having analyzed several contemporary monothelite proposals (chapter 2) and having examined historic dyothelitism, giving special attention to its Reformed expression (chap. 3-4), we are now prepared to pose the following question: which approach to the volitional life of Christ provides the most biblically and theologically satisfying account of the incarnation? In doing so, this chapter seeks to show how a contemporary dyothelite Christology might be constructed. It is important to remember that our method is *dogmatic* in the Bavinckian sense of the term; that is, our method seeks to defend what Christians ought to believe on the basis of Scripture (exegetical and biblical theology) interpreted in conversation with the Christian tradition (historical or retrieval theology) with a view to the faith and practice of the contemporary church (systematic or constructive—even pastoral—theology). The previous two chapters engaged the middle phase of this method. There, we attempted not only to demonstrate that dyothelitism is the majority report in church history but also to retrieve the biblical and theological rationale for this traditional position. In the present chapter we turn our attention more explicitly to the biblical and theological issues raised by the monothelite controversy.

The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section attempts to summarize the biblical case for Christ's two wills. Here, we will discuss the *locus classicus* of dyothelitism, the Gethsemane Narrative, as well as key passages in John's

gospel and the book of Hebrews that impinge upon the monothelite debate. In the second section, we will explore how the monothelite-dyothelite controversy bears upon the three dogmatic loci that have framed our discussion thus far: Christology proper, the Trinity, and soteriology.

Biblical Considerations

Scriptural interpretation is not the only factor involved in the monothelite-dyothelite debate. Some proponents of contemporary monothelitism are more driven by exegesis than others. Others appear to be more driven by philosophical considerations and the legitimate desire to construct a logically coherent model of the incarnation.[1] On the other side of the debate, some Reformed arguments for dyothelitism are more exegetical than others. Others are more self-consciously dogmatic in nature. In sum, all parties to the debate bring their own theological and philosophical assumptions to the table when interpreting the crucial biblical texts. Still, it is the conviction of this dissertation that Scripture is the *norma normans* in the theological task. Scripture itself must have pride of place in any truly evangelical theological formulation. So, this section will attempt to take a fresh look at the most important biblical passages that impinge upon the debate over Christ's volitional life.

The noun form of the primary Greek word for "will," θέλημα, occurs 62 times in the New Testament. The verb form, θέλω, is more common, occurring 208 times. In a few cases, the "will" in view is clearly the will of Christ (Luke 22:42; John 21:22, 23). References to the Father's will are also highly relevant for the monothelite debate (e.g., Matt 6:10; 26:42; Heb 10:7, 9). The discussion below examines those New Testament passages that explicitly mention the will of Christ in relation to the will of the Father.

---

[1]For example, Klaus Issler and Bruce Ware seem to be more concerned with biblical argumentation than, say, Alvin Plantinga or J. P. Moreland. This is not to suggest that the latter pair of scholars are less committed to biblical authority or the former pair less committed to logical coherence. It is simply a matter of emphasis and disciplinary focus.

The first subsection investigates the most common proof text for dyothelitism, the Gethsemane Narrative, as it is imbedded in each of the Synoptic Gospels. The second subsection explores the references to Christ's will in Hebrews 10:7, 9 and John 6:38. The final subsection addresses some of the biblical arguments cited in favor of monothtelitism.

The Gethsemane Narrative

"Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42 AV). From the earliest generations of the Christian church, Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane has been a crucial component of the gospel narrative and an inspiring picture of Jesus' sacrifice and example.[2] All three synoptic gospels include an account of Jesus' anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane just before his betrayal and arrest (Matt 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46). This Gethsemane Narrative includes the clearest reference to the volitional life of the incarnate Christ to be found in Scripture. Consequently, it has served at the most frequently cited proof text in favor of dyothelitism and continues to be ground zero for the exegetical debate over the number of wills in the incarnate Christ.

Before looking at the specific texts, a few general comments regarding the Gethsemane Narrative are in order. First, it is important to note the relation between the Gethsemane Narrative and the broader Passion Narrative in which it is embedded. There is a sense in which Jesus' passion begins in Gethsemane, not merely at Golgotha.[3] As we

---

[2]For the reception of the Gethsemane Narrative in the Apostolic Fathers, see Stephen E. Young, *Jesus Tradition in the Apostolic Fathers: Their Explicit Appeals to the Words of Jesus in Light of Orality Studies* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 234-37.

[3]One could also argue that Christ's atoning work began with his virgin conception and continued throughout each phase of his life. The whole life of Jesus is necessary for his work of redemption, not just his atoning death. His incarnation, his sinless and law-keeping life, his victorious and wrath-bearing death on the cross, his triumphant resurrection from the dead, his ascension to and session at the Father's right hand, his intercession on behalf of his people, and his pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost are all integral components of his redeeming work. The redeeming significance of Jesus' whole life has been particularly emphasized in the Reformed tradition in terms of Christ's active obedience. For more on the redemptive significance of Jesus' whole life, see T. F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. Robert T. Walker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009). For a comprehensive

will see when we examine the specific details of the texts, Jesus' agony in the garden is preparatory for his substitutionary death on the cross, and the themes of representation and substitution are played out in dramatic fashion already in Gethsemane. Thus, the Gethsemane Narrative serves, in a sense, as a dramatic enactment of the Evangelists' theology of substitution.

Second, we should note at the outset that the word θέλημα does not have the same technical meaning in the synoptic gospels that it would later have in the seventh century monothelite controversy. When it is used with regard to volition, the English word "will" can refer either to the faculty of choice itself (as in, "My will is free"), to a particular act of volition, (as in, "My will was to choose chocolate ice cream"), or to an agent's purpose, desire, or wish (as in, "His will was accomplished"). The ancient Greek word θέλημα has a similar semantic range.[4] The theological debate over the will(s) of Christ concerns the first meaning of the term: the will as a faculty.[5] In the New Testament, however, θέλημα does not appear to be used in this more technical first sense. So, in the Gethsemane Narrative, "your will be done" most likely means something like, "May your purpose and desire be accomplished." Nevertheless, this admission does not mean that the Gethsemane Narrative has no bearing upon the monothelite controversy. As will be argued in the exegesis below, volitional function implies volitional ontology. Surely one must possess the requisite volitional equipage in order to make a choice or to have a plan or a purpose.

---

biblical treatment of each of the aspects of Christ's work, see Robert A. Peterson, *Salvation Accomplished by the Son: The Work of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011).

[4]Gottlob Schrenk, "θέλω, θέλημα, θέλησις," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), III:44-62.

[5]This is precisely the distinction that Maximus makes in his debate with the monothelite Pyrrhus, namely, the distinction between the faculty of will and the object of will. See Thomas A. Watts, "Two Wills in Christ? Contemporary Objections Considered in Light of a Critical Examination of Maximus the Confessor's *Disputation with Pyrrhus*," *WTJ* 71 (2009), 473-75.

Third, the Gethsemane Narrative cannot stand alone as a proof-text for dyothelitism. The main theological/philosophical question under consideration in the monothelite debate is simply this: do wills belong to persons or to natures? No single text can answer this complicated Christological question. In Gethsemane, Jesus' will is clearly contrasted with his Father's. But the passage is still underdetermined when it comes to the number of Christ's wills. One could argue that wills belong to persons, and since there are two divine persons involved in the Gethsemane prayer (the Father and the Son), one would naturally expect to see a distinction of their personal wills. Moreland and Craig suggest this interpretation in their defense of monothelitism:

> Passages in the Gospels usually used as proof texts of this doctrine [i.e. dyothelitism]—such as Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane, "Yet, not my will but yours be done" (Lk. 22:42—do not contemplate a struggle of Jesus' human will with his divine will (he is not, after all, talking to himself!), but have reference to the interaction between Jesus' will ("my will") and the Father's will ("yours"). Possessing a typical human consciousness, Jesus had to struggle against fear, weakness and temptation in order to align his will with that of his heavenly Father. The will of the Logos had in virtue of the Incarnation become the will of the man Jesus of Nazareth.[6]

On this account, one will in Christ would imply three wills in the Godhead and thus some version of social trinitarianism.[7] Such a reading is problematic not only because it introduces a division in the divine will, but also because it suggests that the will of the divine Son has been contracted, so to speak, to the will of a mere man. This kenotic reading, curiously, seems to suggest that the Son's one and only will lacks full conformity to the divine will of the Father—at least for a season. In turn, this suggestion

---

[6]J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2003), 611. Jordan Wessling also explores how this "trithelitic" understanding of the divine nature could yield a "straightforwardly monothelitic" interpretation of Jesus' Gethsemane prayer. See Jordan Wessling, "Christology and Conciliar Authority: On the Viability of Monothelitism for Protestant Theology," in *Christology, Ancient and Modern: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 154.

[7]So, it is no accident that monothelite Christologies go hand-in-glove with social accounts of the Trinity. See, for example, J. Scott Horrell, "The Eternal Son of God in the Social Trinity," in *Jesus and Trinitarian Perspective*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler, 44-79. For more on the Trinitarian implications of monothelitism, see the theological section below.

would imply that the Son's singular will has to be convinced that the cross is the necessary means of salvation for God's people. In short, this monothelite/social-trinitarian reading introduces a problematic severance of wills within the Godhead. These trinitarian implications of monothelitism will be explored further in the theological section below.

A dyothelite reading, on the other hand, would argue that the "will" in view in the Gethsemane Narrative is the Son's *human* will, which is distinguished from the divine will of the Father. To be sure, on the dyothelite reading, the Son in his divinity possesses the same divine will as the Father (along with the Holy Spirit), but this broader trinitarian point is not the issue under consideration in this text.[8] Instead, as Christian interpreters have always acknowledged, the Gethsemane narrative is a deeply human account of Jesus' experience. While we cannot divide or separate the natures of Christ, we can distinguish the attributes that belong properly to each. The traditional view has argued that Jesus' agonizing prayer in the garden reveals his human struggle with the prospect of his looming death.[9] The text shows how the Son's human will is perfectly conformed to the divine will. Though it is functionally one with the divine will, Christ's human will is ontologically distinct and must undergo a trial of conformity to the divine will. In the words of Hebrews, "Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him" (Heb 5:8-9).[10]

---

[8]So, no, Christ is not talking to himself, as Moreland and Craig suggest the dyothelite interpretation implies. The person of the Son *in and through his human nature* is addressing the Father, who possesses the divine will. The fact that the Son also possesses the divine will is simply not addressed in this passage. It is an implication from other biblical and theological considerations regarding the unity of the divine nature.

[9]Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Christ*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (Crestwood, NY: St Vadimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 173-76; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 3.18.1; John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, trans. William Pringle, in *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 17:233.

[10]This Hebrews text seems to have the Gethsemane narrative in view. On the parallels, see

This dyothelite reading accords with the majority view in Christian history and seems to make better sense out of the Trinitarian and Christological issues that the text raises. But is there good exegetical reason to adopt this view? To answer that question, we must turn to the Gethsemane Narrative itself, as it is embedded in each synoptic gospel.

The basic contours of the Gethsemane Narrative are the same in each synoptic gospel. On the final night of Jesus' life, he takes the inner circle of the apostolic band—Peter, James, and John—and enters into a secluded garden called Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives. He expresses to the disciples his extreme sorrow and anguish, instructs them to stay awake and pray, and enters further into the garden in order to pray alone. There, he prays for the "cup" of his death to be removed from him, but resigns his own will to whatever the Father's will has planned. He returns to find his disciples sleeping, rebukes them for failing to keep watch, and instructs them to rise and prepare for his ensuing betrayal. In Matthew and Mark, the retreat-prayer-return pattern is repeated three times, indicating the agony with which Jesus faced his impending death.

Jesus' prayer concerning his "will" vis-à-vis the Father's will is the most relevant portion of the passage for our purposes. Matthew's version of the prayer reads, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will (θέλω) but as you will" (Matt 26:39). In verse 42, Jesus prays again, this time more resolved to his fateful death, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, *your will be done* (γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου)." This passage reveals the soteriological importance of the debate over Christ's wills; language of *will* is juxtaposed with the language of *atonement* (indicated by the "cup" imagery in 26:39). But what if anything does this passage tell us about the number of wills in the incarnate Christ? Again, if taken alone, this passage

---

Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1994) 227-34, cited in R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 1002.

cannot settle the debate, but it seems clear that the passage is emphasizing the genuine *humanness* of Jesus' volitional struggle in the garden.

Two lines of evidence suggest that it is Jesus' uniquely human will that is in view in this passage. First, the literary connections between Matthew's Gethsemane Narrative and his account of the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:7-15) suggest that Jesus' representative (and thus fully human) role is in view in Gethsemane. As commentators have noted, there are several verbal parallels between the "Lord's Prayer" in Matthew 6 and the Lord's prayer Matthew 26: "our/my Father" (Matt 6:9; 26:39, 42), "into temptation" (Matt 6:13; 26:41), and "your will be done" (Matt 6:10; 26:42).[11] Thus, the Lord takes upon his own lips the prayer that he taught his disciples. He is the Son of the Father *par excellence*. Through agonizing prayer, Jesus' human will was perfectly conformed to the Father's will. This exemplary and representative role seems to require a human will for its accomplishment. To cite Hebrews, "He had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Heb 2:17). Here, we have our thesis in short order: the Son's reconciling work ("propitiation for the sins of the people") seems to require the Son's assumption of all that it means to be human, including a human will ("like his brothers in every respect").

Second, the high drama of the Gethsemane Narrative itself also points in the direction of the two-wills interpretation. Jesus is presented as more than a good example in this text. He is also presented as the representative of God's people. In the garden, the disciples sleep while Jesus is praying the prayer he taught them to pray (Matt 26:40, 44). He alone watches and prays. He alone is wholly committed to the petition, "Thy will be done." He alone is the obedient Son of the Father. Thus, Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane is,

---

[11]W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Matthew 19-28*, ICC (London: T & T Clark, 1997), 497.

in a sense, a dramatic enactment of his substitutionary work. Christ's passion begins in the garden: he suffers while his followers sleep. James and John had promised that they could share in his "cup" of suffering (Matt 20:22), but in the final hour Jesus alone must drink the cup of God's wrath in their place (Matt 26:39, 42). Perhaps the garden setting further illustrates this representative work. Adam disobeyed in a garden of paradise; the Last Adam obeyed in a garden of agony.[12] All of this substitutionary evidence only makes sense if Christ can truly stand in the place of Adam, Israel, and the disciples.[13] We can state the matter as follows: Christ *wills* salvation through a human *will* in the place of human *wills*—in spite of the agony that this choice produces. Some kind of human volitional equipage seems necessary in order for him to serve as an adequate substitute. In short, volitional function implies volitional ontology. Christ can will and act as our human representative only because he as assumed our human volitional equipage.

In Mark's version of the Gethsemane Narrative, Jesus expresses his agony in words reminiscent of the sons of Korah: his "soul" (ψυχή) is "very sorrowful" (περίλυπος) to the point of death (Mark 14:34; cf. LXX, Ps 41:6, 7).[14] In so doing, Jesus expresses the longing of the people of God as they wait upon the salvation of the Lord. As in Matthew, Jesus commands his disciples to watch and pray with him, but they fail to do so. Jesus rebukes them for their failure, but in the end he must face his trial alone. Thus, in Mark, as in Matthew, Jesus' representative work is dramatically enacted. He is faithful Israel, longing for the Lord's salvation and willing to undergo whatever suffering

---

[12]Such a reading could find inspiration in St. Irenaeus, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, 34, trans. J. Armitage Robinson (London: SPCK, 1920), 100-02.

[13]This emphasis on Jesus' representative role runs throughout Matthew's Gospel. For a brief but excellent treatment of Matthew's Israel-Jesus typology, see R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1989), 207-10.

[14]Another interesting parallel to this verse is found in Jonah 4:9, where Jonah is "angry (λελύπημαι) to the point of death (ἕως θανάτου)." Jonah's emotional state over the death of his plant was laughably sinful, opposed as he was to God's will for the salvation of the Ninevites. But here Jesus faces his deadly sorrow in full conformity to God's will for the salvation of the nations.

may come for the fulfillment of God's will. He expresses his volitional submission to the Father in full confidence that God's will reigns supreme: "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will (ἀλλ' οὐ τί ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλὰ τί σύ)" (Mark 14:36). The human struggle is real, but so is the righteous submission. Jesus explains the disciples' failure to watch and pray in terms of the weakness of the flesh: "the spirit is willing (πρόθυμον) but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38). The disciples are left speechless at Jesus' final rebuke, but he relieves the tension of the moment by acting upon his submissive prayer: he willingly submits himself to his coming betrayer (Mark 14:41-42).

Luke's version of the Gethsemane Narrative omits the threefold pattern of Matthew and Mark, but it still conveys the progression of torment that Jesus experienced in prayer, even noting its physical effects: "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44).[15] Like Matthew, Luke casts Jesus' instructions to the disciples in terms that echo the Lord's Prayer: "Pray that you may not enter temptation (πειρασμόν)" (Luke 22:40, 46; cf. Luke 11:4). Jesus then proceeds to obey his own injunction, even as the disciples fail to do so. Once again, Jesus is presented in both exemplary and substitutionary terms. He himself embodies the disciples' prayer, even as his disciples sleep. However one interprets the physiology of the "drops of blood," the presence of the blood imagery seems to foreshadow Jesus' ensuing passion. Thus, Jesus' prayer is itself is presented in vicarious terms. He watches and prays while his disciples sleep. He is prepared to face the hour of trial, but Peter, representing the fleeing disciples, is ill

[15]While there is some doubt about the authenticity of vv. 43-44 (the angel's help and the drops of blood), a strong case can be made that the internal evidence supports their inclusion (though the manuscript evidence, it must be admitted, leans toward their exclusion). For a case supporting their authenticity, see I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 831-32. Marshall also includes an excellent summary of the interpretive options for the "sweat" that fell "like great drops of blood falling to the ground."

prepared when temptation comes, denying the Lord three times (Luke 22:54-62).[16]

In sum, the Gethsemane Narrative, as it is embedded in each of the synoptic gospels, emphasizes Jesus' vicarious obedience unto death. He is presented as the true disciple and the faithful Israelite, who willingly submits himself to the Father's plan, even when all around him fall away. He drinks the cup of God's wrath in the place of those who can only make empty promises. His prayer itself is vicarious, producing sweat like drops of blood and foreshadowing his atoning death. The emphasis of the synoptists is upon Jesus' role as the mediator, to use Calvin's favorite Christological category. Jesus' struggle in the garden is a deeply human one. He agonizes over the prospects of his impending death, but he submits his (human) will to the will of the Father in the place of his faltering disciples.

It is difficult to see how a monothelite reading of this passage can make sense out of its unapologetically human character without, at the same time, making significant revisions to classic Christology. A monothelite reading would seem to demand some version of social trinitarianism combined with some version of kenoticism. In such a view, the Son possesses a personal will distinct from the Father's and has contracted this will to the finitude of human weakness. On the other hand, a dyothelite reading assumes the unity of the divine will and the reality of the Son's divine life beyond the limitations of his human nature. Because of these dogmatic commitments (based, to be sure, on the exegesis of other biblical passages), dyothelites such as Gregory, Maximus, Calvin, and Gill could only interpret Jesus' volitional struggle in Gethsemane in terms of the two-wills paradigm. Once again, the Gethsemane Narrative cannot stand alone as a proof text either for dyothelitism or for monothelitism. The question before Christian interpreters is simply this: Which set of theological entailments is preferable when it comes to our

[16]In Matthew and Mark, Jesus' threefold prayer of submission stands in stark contrast to Peter's threefold denial.

interpretation of the Gethsemane Narrative? Or to state it more negatively, which set of theological problems are we willing to live with in our interpretation of Gethsemane? Is it preferable to assume a one-willed Godhead and a two-willed Christ and thus open ourselves up to the charges of modalism and Nestorianism? Or is it preferable to assume a three-willed Godhead and a one-willed Christ and thus open ourselves up to the charges of tritheism and Apollinarianism/monophysitism? These questions will be addressed in the theological considerations below. But for now, it is sufficient to note that the Gethsemane Narrative emphasizes the Son's representative humanity and his vicarious work. Other passages and other theological themes would have to be adduced to demonstrate that the incarnate Christ's volitional life is not reducible to his Gethsemane experience.

Hebrews 10:7, 9 and John 6:38

Because they both speak of the Son "coming" to "do the will" of God, we can treat Hebrews 10:1-10 and John 6:38 together.[17] As with the Gethsemane Narrative, the emphasis of Hebrews 10:1-10 is on the representative nature of Christ's work. Indeed, the theme of Christ's priestly representation dominates the entire book of Hebrews. Just as the Aaronic high priest was chosen from among the people (Heb 5:1) and in a sense bore the nation of Israel with him into the Holy of Holies (symbolized powerfully by the names of the twelve tribes graven on his breast piece; Exod 39:14), so too Christ partook of flesh and blood in order to save the offspring of Abraham: "Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers in every respect" (Heb 2:17). Hebrews 10:1-10 continues this priestly theme. And as in the Gethsemane Narrative, the will of Christ is paired with his atoning death. In describing the finality of Christ's sacrifice—over against the perpetuity of the Levitical sacrifices (Heb 10:1-4)—the writer cites Psalm 40:6-8:

[17]There are also other texts in John's gospel that speak of the Son coming to do the "will" of the Father (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:39, 40), but none are as explicit as John 6:38 in this regard.

> Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, "Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book." (Heb 10:5-7)

The writer then interprets the psalm Christologically by placing the prayer on the lips of Christ:

> When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" these things are offered according to the law) then he added, "Behold I have come to do your will." He abolished the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Heb 10:8-10)

This passage is of a piece with the elaborate cult-typology that runs throughout the book of Hebrews. This is not the place to develop these themes in detail.[18] For our purposes it is sufficient to note the close connection that is drawn between the will of the Son, spoken of prophetically through the words of the Davidic type, and his epoch-shifting, sacrificial death. The Son's decision to do the will of God brings about an end to the perpetual sacrifices of the Old Covenant and ushers in the eternal blessings of the New Covenant through his atoning death. According to the writer of Hebrews, the structure of the psalm is crucial. A statement about the insufficiency of the Levitical sacrifices is followed by the Davidic king's determination to do the will of God. Thus, the old order is replaced with the new. This redemptive-historical shift takes place precisely because the will of the Son is perfectly conformed to the will of the Father.[19]

As with the Matthew passage, we should acknowledge that "will" is not being used here in a technical sense to denote a faculty of the human soul. Here, too, it probably means something like "purpose" or "plan." But as with the other text, this

---

[18]In addition to all of the standard commentaries on Hebrews, see also *Jesus Our Priest: A Christian Approach to the Priesthood of Christ*, ed. Gerald O'Collins, S.J., and Michael Keenan Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[19]On the use Psalm 40 in Hebrews, see George H. Guthrie, "Hebrews," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 975-78.

passage has implications for the debate over the will(s) of Christ. To put the matter simply, function ("will" as purpose) requires some ontology ("will" as faculty). Also similar to Matthew 26, this passage distinguishes the will of the Messiah from the will of God the Father: "I (a distinct subject) have come to do your will, O God." Again we are faced with the same choice: the Son's will is distinct from the Father's either because wills belong to persons and the Trinitarian persons are eternally distinct (monothelitism) or because wills belong to natures and the Son's human will is in view in this passage (dyothelitism).

When Hebrews 10:1-10 is read in the context of the whole book, it seems that the writer is indeed emphasizing the human, representative role of Christ. Hebrews 9-10 comprise an extended contrast between the sacrifices of the Old Covenant and the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. Christ's sacrifice is superior in terms of *place* (heaven not earth; 9:11, 23-25; 10:12-13), *value* (his own blood not the blood of animals; 9:12-28; 10:19), and *permanence* (once-for-all not continuous; 9:25-26; 10:1-18).[20] Already in the Old Testament there was an anxiety building over the ineffectiveness of the Levitical sacrifices. "Old Testament as revelation here again signals its own end as an institution."[21] This "end" would not, however, do away with the need for blood atonement. Some opponents of penal substitution have argued that the prophetic criticisms of the sacrificial system, such as we find in Psalm 40, indicate that atonement is not really necessary for forgiveness. Interestingly, the writer of Hebrews seems to argue just the opposite: the insufficiency of the Levitical sacrifices revealed the need for a greater sacrifice yet to come.

According to Hebrews' interpretation of Psalm 40, the animal sacrifices of the

---

[20]Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 304.

[21]Albert Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest according to the New Testament* (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's, 1986), 213, cited in O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 344.

Old Covenant were to be displaced by an even greater sacrifice: the body of the Davidic king-priest.[22] God would fashion a human body for the king, who would, in turn, render willing obedience to God through this body. When applied to Christ, this psalm seems to be a clear reference to the Incarnation: Christ said these words when he "came into the world" (10:5).[23] Citing the Septuagint version of the psalm, the writer uses "body" (σῶμα) here as a reference to the entire human nature of Christ, not merely its material component. The Masoretic Text literally reads, "Ears you have dug for me," but the Septuagint interprets this phrase as a metonymy: the digging of the ears represents the fashioning of the entire body.[24] But again the writer of Hebrews is using σῶμα here, as he typically uses σάρξ, as a reference to the entire human nature of Christ. "Since therefore the children share in *flesh and blood* (αἵματος καὶ σαρκός), he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14). The writer expresses this truth in summary fashion in Hebrews 2:17: "Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Just as the high priest must be chosen from among the people, so too Christ, the Great High Priest, must share in the nature of those whom he represents (Heb 5:1-10). The fact that Hebrews 10:5-10 connects this principle with the *will* of Christ seems to point in the direction of dyothelitism.

There is some debate among commentators about the timing of this "saying" of Christ. Did the writer of Hebrews envision Christ expressing the sentiment of Psalm 40

---

[22]Even though Heb 10:5-7 cites a royal psalm, the priestly theme is never far from view. Indeed, Heb 10:11-18 seamlessly transitions back into priestly imagery. Christ fulfills both royal and cultic expectations. The Melchizedekian typology is marshaled precisely to show the coherence of these two offices in the person of the Messiah.

[23]O'Brien cites several examples in the New Testament where this phrase is used as a reference to the Incarnation. O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 349, footnote 35.

[24]F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 240.

in his preincarnate state or in his incarnate state?[25] Those who take the former view would argue that Christ's "incarnation itself is viewed as an act of submission to God's will, and, as such, as an anticipation of his supreme submission to that will in death."[26] In this understanding, there is a sense in which the Son is eternally submissive to the Father by virtue of their immanent relations.[27] This position might be pressed further to demand distinct personal wills in the Godhead. After all, would it make sense to say that the Son is eternally submissive to the Father's will, if they possess the identically same divine will? Would it not make more sense to posit three wills in the Godhead in order to preserve real relations between the members of the Trinity?

Interestingly, this challenge to the dyothelite view is not new. As we saw in chapter 3, Gregory of Nazianzus wrestled with this very issue when he sought to understand a similar text, John 6:38: "For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me." Gregory acknowledges that one cannot explain this verse in terms of Jesus' human will (as Gregory himself does with Matthew 26:39), because Jesus spoke these words with reference to a preincarnate decision. "This

---

[25]O'Brien cites F. F. Bruce, William Lane, and Paul Ellington in favor of the preincarnate view. David Peterson and C. R. Koester are more inclined to adopt the incarnate view. O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 349.

[26]Bruce, *Hebrews*, 242.

[27]The debate over the eternal subordination of the Son rages on within evangelicalism. For a defense of eternal, functional submission, see Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Roles, Relationships, and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005). For a critique of functional subordinationism, see Kevin Giles, *Jesus and the Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), and Millard Erickson, *Who's Tampering with the Trinity? An Assessment of the Subordination Debate* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009). For a collection of essays from differing perspectives, see Dennis W. Jowers and H. Wayne House, *The New Evangelical Subordinationism? Perspectives on the Equality of God the Father and God the Son* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012). Whatever else we may say about this debate (which is too often and unfortunately tangled up with another important but separable debate, in my estimation, namely, the issue of gender roles), it seems clear that the traditional understanding of the Trinity would rule out at least some forms of functional subordinationism, specifically those that envision the authority/submission structure to imply multiple wills in the Godhead. For a critique of functional subordinationism along these lines, see Phillip Cary, "The New Evangelical Subordinationism: Reading Inequality into the Trinity," in *The New Evangelical Subordinationism? Perspectives on the Equality of God the Father and God the Son*, ed. Dennis W. Jowers and H. Wayne House (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 6.

is the language of him who assumed our nature (for he it was who came down), and not of the [human] nature which he assumed." So, with reference to John 6:38, Gregory says, "The passage does not mean that the Son has a special will of his own, besides that of the Father, but that he has not."[28] In other words, the passage does indeed refer to the divine will of the Son, but this will is indistinguishable from the will of the Father.[29] Gregory then offers his interpretive paraphrase of John 6:39: I have come "not do mine own will, for there is none of mine apart from, but that which is common to, me and thee; for as we have one Godhead, so we have one will." He goes on to say, "For many such expressions are used in relation to this community [of the Trinity], and are expressed not positively but negatively."[30] In other words, for the Son to say that he came not to do his own will but the will of the Father does not necessarily mean that they have separate divine wills. In fact, it seems to mean just the opposite; the preincarnate, divine will of the Son simply *is* the divine will of the Father.

But if the divine will is singular, how can we preserve the distinct acts of will assigned to each member of the Trinity? How can we account for real, inter-Trinitarian relations in the immanent Trinity? Gregory makes no attempt to explain how these

---

[28]Gregory of Nazianzus, "Fourth Theological Oration," in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wallace, vol. 7 (New York: Christian Literature, 1894), 341.

[29]In maintaining one divine will in the Godhead and an additional human will in the incarnate Christ (though this human will is not in view in John 6:38), Gregory clearly seems to affirm dyothelite position. This descriptor might be a bit anachronistic, since the monothelite controversy was still three centuries down the road from Gregory. However, Gregory's argument affirms all of the essential elements of the later dyothelite position. This is significant because many today believe that the Sixth Ecumenical Council was an unnecessary and unhelpful post-Chalcedonian development. Gregory shows that the two-wills view has a more ancient pedigree than these criticisms allow. It is also significant that Gregory, one of the leading Eastern theologians of the fourth century, affirms one divine will in the Godhead. This is significant because the Eastern Fathers, and the Cappadocians in particular, are often cited as early proponents of "social Trinitarianism." Gregory's strong affirmation of a singular divine will seems to argue against this view. For a helpful criticism of the social Trinitarian interpretation of the Eastern Fathers, see Richard Cross, "Two Models of the Trinity?" in *Oxford Readings in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Michael Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 107-26.

[30]Gregory, "Fourth Theological Oration," 341.

relations "work." He simply affirms that the persons are distinct and yet share in the one divine will: "I cannot see how that which is common to two can be said to belong to one alone."[31] Perhaps we could say that the three persons of the Trinity each work through the one divine will but with different effects, owing to their distinct personal properties (the traditional properties of unbegottenness, begottenness, and procession). In any event, it is not immediately apparent that inter-Trinitarian relations *require* three distinct wills in the Godhead. Furthermore, such a view would seem to lead to some form of social Trinitarianism, which could have difficulty maintaining the essential unity of the Godhead, at least in its robust, Nicene form.[32]

So, returning to Hebrews 10:5-10, it appears that the timing of Jesus' prayer does not determine the debate over monothelitism. Even if these words are placed on the lips of the preincarnate Christ, this interpretation would not necessarily lead one to monothelite conclusions. Nevertheless, there is good reason to believe that the saying is more appropriately assigned to Christ in his incarnate state. Several factors favor this interpretation. First, the participle εἰσερχόμενος in Hebrews 10:5 is best understood in a temporal sense: "*When* he came into the world, he said." Christ utters this psalm after he has already come into the world.[33] Second, the reference to the "body" in Hebrews 10:5 also points in the direction of an incarnate utterance. Perhaps the *preparation* of the body could be seen in a preincarnate context, in the sense that it was predesigned in the mind of God. But the verse seems to assume that the body has already been fashioned and

---

[31]Ibid.

[32]For a discussion of Social Trinitarianism, see Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004). See also William J. LaDue, *The Trinity Guide to the Trinity* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2003); Fred Sanders, *The Image of the Immanent Trinity: Rahner's Rule and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004); William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 575-88.

[33]The historical Jesus need not have actually quoted this psalm with reference to himself for the point to stand. The writer of Hebrews is interpreting David's psalm typologically: Christ fulfills the prophetic intent of this psalm, not necessarily by what he says but what he does in obedience to God's will.

assumed into the person of the Son: "the body you prepared (κατηρτίσω; aorist) for me." Third, the actual statement concerning God's will is in the present tense and is most naturally read as an incarnate statement: "I have come (ἥκω) to do your will" (v. 7). When all of this evidence is taken together, it seems best to read the psalm as a messianic prophecy, typologically applied to the incarnate Christ.[34] In sum, Christ's substitutionary work detailed in this passage seems to require a genuine human will because it is precisely through a *human* will that the Messianic king renders obedience to the will of God. But once again we should avoid overstating the exegetical case for dyothelitism. The emphasis on the Son's human will in Hebrews 10 will yield dyothelitism only if one assumes that the divine will is singular and that the Son is not limited to his human will. In other words, a dyothelite reading of Hebrew 10 seems to require a rejection of both social trinitarianism and kenoticism. Stated positively, a dyothelite reading seems to require both classic trinitarianism (with its insistence upon the unity of the divine will) and classic Christology (with its insistence that wills belong to natures and that the Son's volitional life is not limited to his human will). In other words, exegesis and theology are, as ever, tangled up together.

Responding to the Biblical Arguments of Monothelitism

Other biblical texts could be considered, but we have examined the most relevant passages for the monothelite-dyothelite debate, namely, those which explicitly speak of the Son's will vis-à-vis the will of the Father. We have not considered passages that speak to the person of Christ more generally, demonstrating his full divinity, his full humanity, and the unity of his person. For the most part, parties on both sides of the

[34]O'Brien argues that v. 5 is inconclusive regarding the timing of the statement. "This introductory verse may not stress any particular moment when Christ's act of obedience to the divine will was made." However, citing D. G. Peterson, O'Brien sees v. 7 as more determinative: "The words of v. 7…which are 'for our writer the essential utterance of Christ in the psalm,' seem to describe 'the attitude of one who has already come.'" O'Brien, *Hebrews*, 349.

monothelite debate agree upon these scriptural data. We could also consider biblical passages that are adduced on the monothelite side of the ledger. Kenoticists obviously give significant weight to the Christological hymn of Philippians 2.[35] Proponents of Spirit Christology emphasize Jesus' dependence upon the Holy Spirit for his mighty works and the apparent limitations Jesus faces in the gospels. A full consideration of these exegetical matters related to Philippians 2 is beyond the scope of this chapter. In any event, the passage has been adequately addressed elsewhere. Suffice it to say that there are better interpretive options than the one offered by proponents of the kenotic theory.[36] Philippians 2:7 teaches, not that the Son empties out any of his divine attributes, but that he empties *himself* in his incarnational mission.[37] Further, the "emptying" that takes place in the Son's incarnation, as many commentators have noted, is a subtraction by addition: he empties himself "by taking the form of a servant." This assumption of humanity does indeed veil his divine glory, but in no way does it eliminate it or diminish it. It is perhaps best to think of the incarnation as a *krypsis* (veiling or hiding) rather than an actual, metaphysical *kenosis* (emptying).[38] However we interpret Philippians 2, we must read this important text in light of other important texts in the New Testament. For example, the passages typically cited in favor of the *extra Calvinisticum*—passages which speak of the Son's ongoing providential work (Col 1:15-20; Heb 1:3)—would need to be reconciled with one's interpretation of the kenotic hymn.

---

[35]For example, see Gordon D. Fee, "The New Testament and Kenosis Christology," in *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God*, ed. C. Stephen Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1-24.

[36]Peter O'Brien offers a convincing case for a non-kenotic reading of this passage. Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 205-52.

[37]Bruce A. Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 19.

[38]Oliver D. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 147-53.

The biblical arguments in favor of Spirit Christology require a fuller response. There is little doubt that the New Testament does indeed present Christ as the Spirit-anointed Messiah. Jesus states the matter plainly: "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt 12:28). In this verse, Matthew makes explicit what the other two Synoptic Gospels imply about Jesus' exorcisms, namely, Jesus performs his Satan-plundering ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit. This claim about the Spirit's role in Jesus' life and ministry is consistent with the presentation of Christ found elsewhere in the New Testament. Jesus was conceived by the Spirit, descended upon by the Spirit at his baptism, led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested, anointed by the Spirit to preach good news to the poor, empowered by the Spirit to offer himself without blemish to God, and raised from the dead by the agency of the Spirit. Furthermore, this New Testament emphasis on the Holy Spirit's role in Jesus' ministry is consistent with the Old Testament hope for a Spirit-anointed prophet, priest, and Messianic king. In short, it is impossible to understand the biblical portrait of Christ without accounting for the Holy Spirit's role in his identity and mission.[39]

But this emphasis on the role of the Spirit in Jesus' life and ministry is one Christological theme among many others in the New Testament. It would not be advisable to build an entire model of incarnational action on this one Christological plank, so to speak. The New Testament also presents Christ as one who speaks and acts *as God*. Richard Bauckham has argued convincingly for a Christology of "divine identity" present in the earliest strata of Christian tradition and taught in each Jesus is portrayed by the biblical authors as one who included in the very identity of God—the

---

[39]As noted in chap. 2, the most thorough exploration of this theme to date is Gerald Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus* (Dallas: Word, 1990). See also Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus* and Klaus Issler, "Jesus' Example: Prototype of the Dependent, Spirit-Filled Life," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 189-225.

one true God of Israel, the one who created and providentially sustains the world, and the one who has acted uniquely in the history of Israel for her and the world's salvation.[40]

We see this divine identity Christology in several places throughout the NT. For example, consider one of the most dramatic of Jesus' nature miracles: his walking on the water in Mark 6. Mark's account of this scene contains an interesting intertextual connection back to Job 9. Indeed, the Greek of Mark 6:48 is nearly identical to the Septuagintal rendering of Job 9:8, 11.[41] In Job, it is *the Lord* who "trample[s] the waves of the sea" and "passes by" Job so that he "see[s] him not." In Mark, it is Christ himself who intends to "pass by" the disciples as he comes "walking on the sea." Is it any wonder, then, that the disciples are terrified when they see him in verse 50. Mark then places his own *ego eimi* declaration on the lips of Jesus (a locution most often associated with John's gospel), as Jesus replies "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." And when Jesus enters the boat, the wind ceases. So Jesus is presented here in Mark 6 as nothing less than the Lord himself, who possesses authority over the chaotic forces of nature. And this doesn't seem to be a derived authority, made available to Jesus simply by means of the Holy Spirit. Instead, he seems to be exercising his own divine prerogatives. So, the disciples' question in response to another of Jesus' nature miracles seems appropriate here as well: "Who then is this (a question of identity, of intrinsic authority) that even the wind and waves obey him?"

We also see Jesus' divine identity in his supernatural knowledge. Now, to be

---

[40]For a discussion of Jesus taking on the very identity of God, see Richard Bauckham's excellent work, *Jesus and the God of Israel:* God Crucified *and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). Bauckham argues that the Synoptics, no less than John, present Jesus as one who assumes the role and identity of God himself. Similarly, Simon Gathercole argues that the Synoptics do indeed teach the pre-existence doctrine. See Simon J. Gathercole, *The Pre-existent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006). Hawthorne seems to accept the older view that John's presentation is more "incarnational" than the Synoptic Gospels. Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 44-45.

[41]James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 198.

sure, we also have to deal with some passages that speak of Christ's ignorance of certain matters and his growth in wisdom and so forth. But a case can be made that the traditional two-minds/two-wills position, especially as it has been expressed in the Reformed tradition, is well-suited to account for both data sets: Christ's unlimited divine knowledge and his limited human knowledge. But that discussion would take us too far afield. For our present purposes, we should acknowledge that, at least at certain points in Jesus' life, the Evangelists present him as one who has access to supernatural knowledge. And this access seems to inhere in his own personality, not merely in his status as a Spirit-inspired prophet. So, for example, in John 13:19, after Jesus has predicted his betrayal at the hands of one of the disciples, he states, "I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe *ego eimi*." This is one of the seven standalone "I am" statements in John. Thus, it seems that Jesus is hanging his divine identity on his ability to foretell future events. At this point, I think we can hear a thematic echo of YHWH's own defense of his deity over against the worthless idols of the nations *on precisely these same grounds*, namely, his divine foreknowledge:[42]

> Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose," calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it. (Isa 46:8-11)

There are other passages that point in the same direction. Jesus is identified with God when he forgives sins, inaugurates the kingdom of God, presumes to interpret and legislate divine law, is transfigured before his disciples, assumes the divine moniker "I am," is cognizant of his preexistent and future divine glory, establishes the New

[42]I am grateful to Bruce Ware for pointing me to this line of argumentation in a Sunday School class (we were once members together at Clifton Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky).

Covenant, and so forth.[43] One could perhaps explain all of these instances as mere exceptions to the rule, as some proponents of Spirit Christology do,[44] but these divine identity markers are so pervasive in the gospel accounts that such an argument would seem to be special pleading. In sum, while the New Testament clearly presents Jesus as the Spirit-anointed Messiah and Spirit-empowered prophet, these themes do not exhaust who he is and how he operates as the incarnate Son of God. So even if one concedes the biblical case made by Spirit Christology proponents, their monothelite conclusions do not necessarily follow.

Conclusion

The biblical case for dyothelitism can be summarized as follows. Several passages in the New Testament—chief among them, Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane—speak of the Son submitting his own will to the will of the Father. Thus, a distinction of wills is implied in the Father-Son relation. The Gethsemane Narrative places emphasis upon the Son's human weakness as well as his vicarious obedience in the face of his volitional struggle. Hebrews 10 makes a similar point about the Son's will: he is the Davidic king-priest, whose submission to the divine will accomplishes redemption on behalf of God's people, displacing the Old Covenant with its ineffectual sacrifices. John 6:38 potentially addresses a different matter entirely, namely, the Son of God in his pre-incarnate determining to come to earth not to do his own will but the will of the one who sent him. But even if the context for the Son's volitional submission to the Father is eternal, this fact does not, in and of itself, prove a trithelitic Godhead. Indeed, the point of the passage seems to be that the will of the Son and the will of the Father are one (at

[43]Issler notes a few other examples of what he calls "special cases." He mostly agrees with Hawthorne's proposal but is ready to admit that Jesus acted on his own authority on at least a few occasions. Issler, "Jesus' Example," 204.

[44]Issler, "Jesus' Example," 204-05.

least functionally), and the verse does not preclude the possibility that the divine will is numerically singular. As Gregory's interpretation suggests, Jesus' point was merely rhetorical: the Son does not possess a will of his own, distinct from the Father's; instead, their "wills" are not merely functionally but ontologically one. Like the Gethsemane Narrative, this passage is Christologically underdetermined; its interpretation is influenced by a series of dogmatic considerations.

Thus, the New Testament's distinction between the will of the Son and the will of the Father can be explained in a couple of different ways. If one assumes that wills belong to persons, then the divine persons possess eternally distinct wills. This view entails some version of social trinitarianism, since it envisions the persons of the Trinity as distinct volitional subjects. It also seems to imply some version of kenoticism, since the Son's singular will has presumably been contracted to the human experience of Christ. On the other hand, if one assumes that wills belong to natures, then the volitional tension between the Father and the Son is explicable in incarnational terms: the Son has assumed a discrete human will in furtherance of his mission as the Mediator. This human will, though finally one with the divine will, is nonetheless ontologically distinct from it. Further, in this scenario, the Son is not limited to his finite human volition. He continues to exercise the divine will by virtue of his identity as God the Son.

The biblical arguments cited in favor of monothelitism are compelling. The Christological hymn of Philippians 2 is a powerful testimony to the Son's condescension in being made incarnate. But the kenotic reading proves too much. The passage need not be interpreted in terms of attribute-surrender. Properly speaking, the Son empties *himself* in the incarnation; he does not empty out any of his essential divine attributes. Further, he empties himself, not by surrender, but by assumption: by taking the form of a servant. His divinity is veiled, to be sure; but it is not surrendered or "turned off" in the incarnation. Similarly, the passages cited in favor of Spirit Christology are crucial for our

understanding of Christ, but they do not necessarily lead to monothelite conclusions. The Son is Spirit-empowered in his humanity, but this scriptural datum does not overturn other Christolgoical themes that emphasis the Son's ongoing divine life (via the *extra Calvinisticum*) and the divine identity displayed in his wonder-working ministry.

Theological Considerations

We have argued that one's interpretation of the key biblical texts in the monothelite debate are at least partially determined by dogmatic considerations. We now turn our attention to some of the most important theological issues at stake in the debate over Christ's volitional life. While this issue potentially bears upon every loci of systematic theology, we will narrow our focus to three: Christology, the doctrine of God (specifically, the Trinity), and soteriology.[45]

Christology Proper

It is self-evident that the monothelite debate bears upon Christology, but here we must tease out the implications of this debate for what we are calling "Christology proper." How is the monothelite-dyothelite debate influenced by broader Christological considerations? What model of the incarnation fits best with each of these approaches to the person of Christ? How does the chruch's Chalcedonian consensus orient the discussion? This section seeks to address these questions.

A concretist approach. As we saw in chapter two, the contemporary shift away from dyothelitism has been largely (perhaps entirely) undertaken by those committed (either explicitly or implicitly) to an abstractist understanding of the

[45]Ian McFarland has explored how the dyothelitism touches upon theological anthropology, specifically how it relates to human freedom vis-à-vis original sin. Ian A. McFarland, "Willing is Not Choosing: Some Anthropological Implications of Dyothelite Christology," *IJST* 9, no. 1 (January 2007): 3-23. This essay also appears in Ian A. McFarland, *In Adam's Fall: A Meditation on the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

incarnation. According to abstractism, in the incarnation the Son assumed, not a concrete human soul, but the abstract property (or set of properties) of being a human soul. Some proponents of abstractism have explicitly spelled out the monothelite implications of their view. For example, Plantinga and Moreland and Craig understand abstractism to entail the singularity of Christ's mind/will.[46] Other abstractists, such as Thomas Morris and Richard Swineburne, attempt to speak of Christ in terms of "two minds" or "two ways of willing." But it is not clear that their abstractism will permit such a move. If "being a human soul" is simply an abstract property assumed by the Son, then two substantial minds or wills would seem to be superfluous. The "two" minds or wills would simply be aspects of the singular soul substance of the Son. As we saw in chapter two, the proposals of both Morris and Swinburne essentially collapse into monothelitism.

So, it seems that the fortunes of dyothelitism are bound up with the viability of a concretist approach to the incarnation. According to concretism, the incarnation involves the Son's assumption of a concrete human nature (body and soul). The Son did not merely assume *human nature* generally, viewed as a universal property common to humanity. He also assumed *a* human nature: a concrete particular human nature, including both body and soul. This understanding of the incarnation appears to the one adopted in the dyothelite tradition. Dyothelites from Maximus the Confessor to T. F. Torrance seem to be operating with the assumption that the human nature Christ took to himself in his incarnation was a concrete particular.

Futhermore, this view also seems implicit in the Chalcedonian Definition itself. In recent years it has become common to conceive of Chalcedon as a minimalist document—one that tells us mainly what we must *not* say concerning the incarnation

---

[46]J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 611-12.

rather than one that spells out in detail how the incarnation actually works.[47] To be sure, there is much to commend this interpretation of the Definition. Chalcedon does betray a certain apophatic character as evidenced by its four alpha privatives: ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως (without confusion, without change, without division, without separation). But this point can be overstated. The Definition is not as elastic as some contemporary theologians take it to be.[48] Chalcedon is more substantive than is sometimes appreciated, especially as it relates to Christ's human nature. The Definition tells us that Christ's manhood consists of "a reasonable soul and body." This phrase obviously takes aim at the Apollinarians, who denied the Son's assumption of a human soul, but in doing so it makes a more positive statement than a purely apophatic interpretation will allow. This specification about Christ's humanity seems at least to imply a more concretist view of the incarnation. The human nature of Christ consists of two concrete substances: a true body and a rational soul. The soul is "rational" or "reasonable" because it possesses intellectual capacities. We could even say that the soul of Christ possesses its own "mind." Indeed, in Gregory's anti-Apollinarian writings, he was perfectly comfortable speaking of a human mind (*nous*) in the incarnate Christ. And because of the close connection Gregory and others drew between mind and will, it is not a stretch to assume that the Chalcedonian fathers could have just as easily affirmed the Son's assumption of a "volitional soul," that is, a soul possessed of volitional capacities. Therefore, a strong case can be made that Constantinople III is simply the natural outworking of Chalcedon's logic applied to the question of volition. In sum, Chalcedon

---

[47]Richard Sturch, *The Word and the Christ: An Essay in Analytic Christology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Sarah Coakley, "What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not? Some Reflections on the Status and Meaning of the Chalcedonian Definition," in *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, S.J., and Gerald O'Collins, S.J. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 143-63.

[48]Moreland and Craig, for example, think that their revised Apollinarianism can fit within Chalcedonian constraints, a claim that seems self-evidently false.

appears to be at least implicitly concretist.[49]

The Chalcedonian terms. Closely related to the last point, a traditional understanding of the key Chalcedonian terms—person and nature—also seems to imply the basic dyothelite assumption: minds and wills belong to natures, not persons. This seems to be implicit in Chalcedon's "rational soul" phraseology. The human nature that the Son assumed is defined in terms of body and soul, and the soul that he assumed is defined in terms of rationality. Gregory had already made this argument decades before Chalcedon:

> But if he has a soul, and yet is without a mind, how is he man, for man is not a mindless animal? And this would necessarily involve that while his form and tabernacle was human, his soul should be that of a horse or an ox, or some other of the brute creation. This, then, would be what he saves; and I have been deceived by the truth, and led to boast of an honor which had been bestowed upon another. But if his manhood is intellectual and not without mind, let them cease to be thus really mindless.[50]

So the human soul includes a human mind. But what of the will? As we saw in chapter 3, Gregory argued from the Gethsemane Narrative that the Son's human nature includes a human will, which, though distinct from the divine will, "cannot be opposed to God, seeing as it is altogether taken into God."[51] So the Son possesses a human will that is ontologically distinct from but functionally united to the divine will. The definition of the term "soul" seems to determine this conclusion for Gregory.

The terms "person" and "nature" do not have entirely stable and uniform meanings in church history. But a survey of the term "person" reveals that there is common thread. Boethius famously defined a person as "an individual substance of a

---

[49]Interestingly, Plantinga argues that Chalcedon was split on the matter and that the council gave a bit more favor to the abstractist viewpoint. Alvin Plantinga, "On Heresy, Mind, and Truth," *Faith and Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (April 1999): 182-93.

[50]Gregory of Nazianzus, "To Cledonius Against Apollinaris (Epistle 101)," in *Christology of the Later Father*s, ed. Edward R. Hardy (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1954), 219.

[51]Ibid., 185.

rational nature."[52] While there is some question about the Christological utility of this definition, it is clear that Boethius meant "substance" (*substantia*) to be a rough equivalent to the Greek *hypostasis*, meaning a bearer of properties.[53] The nature (*natura*) is distinguished from the person and would include the properties that make up the individual, including, as Boethius' definition makes clear, its rational capacities. So the person is the individual that "stands under" (a literal translation of both *substantia* and *hypostasis*) the nature, which comprises the rational capacities of the individual. Thomas Aquinas' definition of "person" builds upon Boethius's.[54] According to Thomas, a person is a *supposit* in a nature. In Aristotelian terms, Thomas understands a person to be a primary substance that "supposits" a secondary substance. In the case of the incarnation (and only in the case of the incarnation), we have an individual substance, the person of the Son, who supposits *two* secondary substances, the divine nature and the human nature he assumed in the incarnation.[55] For Thomas, the secondary substance of humanity includes both body and soul, with the soul comprising both intellect and will. So despite the differences of expression, Boethius and Thomas affirm the same basic pattern: the person is the individual that exists in the nature, with the latter term comprising the mind and will. To cite one more example, Calvin defines person along similar lines. For Calvin a person is "subsistence" in a nature.[56] The person is the "who" and the nature is the "what." The person "subsists" (exists) in and through the nature,

---

[52]Boethius, *Contra Eutychen et Nestorium*, 85, cited in Philip A. Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 39.

[53]Richard Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 239-40.

[54] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, ed. Daniel J. Sullivan (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), 1.29.1.

[55]See the discussion of Thomas in Marilyn McCord Adams, *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[56]Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 1.13.6.

and it is the latter which includes the intellectual and volitional capacities of the individual.

One of the chief problems of monothelitism is its equivocation on these key Christological terms. According to monothelitism, "person," not "nature," is defined in terms of mind and will. For example, according to Garrett DeWeese, "Willing belongs to the self or personal center" of an individual, not to the nature of the individual."[57] Similarly, kenoticists tend to adopt a more psychological understanding of personhood. Whereas the tradition regarded a person as a difficult-to-define individual who exists in the more-readily-definable nature, kenoticists attempt to make "person" fit modern notions of "personality." P. T. Forsyth, for example, argues that "there could not be two wills, or two consciousnesses, in the same personality, by any psychological possibility now credible. We could not have in the same person both knowledge and ignorance of the same thing."[58] Because he defines person in terms of psychology, he finds a two-minds/two-wills Christology untenable. But it is precisely this shift in the definition of person that deserves scrutiny. Even if the Christian tradition is weighted less heavily than it is in the dogmatic approach of this dissertation, the redefinition of "person" in terms of mind and will proves to have significant trinitarian consequences, which we will explore more below.[59]

The *Extra Calvinisticum*. As we have seen, monothelites tend to have trouble defending the traditional doctrine known as the *extra Calvinisticum*. Some monothelites

---

[57]Garrett J. DeWeese, "One Person, Two Natures: Two Metaphysical Models of the Incarnation," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 132.

[58]P. T. Forsyth, *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ* (Boston: Pilgrim, 1909), 319.

[59]In many ways, Stephen Holmes's *The Quest for the Trinity* is simply a chronicle of this same terminological equivocation in the history of Trinitarian thought. In classic Trinitarian terms, "person" strictly refers to the relations of origin within the Godhead (unbegottenness, begottenness, and procession). The modern Trinitarian "revival," however, defines "person" in psychological and volitional terms.

reject it outright. Gerald Hawthorne takes this approach, arguing that the "dual existence" view of the tradition runs the risk of *de facto* Docetism.[60] Other proponents of monothelitism attempt to carve out a place for the extra within the one mind of Christ. Moreland and Craig, for example, argue that the incarnate Christ has a kind of "subliminal" knowledge by virtue of his divinity that is not immediately accessible to the human restraints he has placed upon himself in the incarnation.[61]

Hawthrone's option seems untenable on both biblical and historical grounds. The *extra Catholicum*, as David Willis terms it, should not be dismissed so readily, given its widespread acceptance in church history.[62] But the doctrine also seems to be born out by Scripture as well. Colossians 1:17 teaches that all things "hold together" in the Son. In other words, the Son is the locus for God's providential sustaining and governing of the world. This biblical emphasis on the "cosmic Christ" is also taught in Hebrews 1:3, which speaks of the Son "uphold[ing] the universe by the Word of his power." Because the Son retains his divinity even in his incarnate state, he continues to carry out these cosmic functions even after assuming a human nature into his person. Hawthorne worries that this position skirts too close to Nestorianism. Curiously, he even accuses Cyril of Alexandria as an example of an untenable "dual existence" understanding of the incarnation: "While visible as a babe in swaddling clothes and yet in the bosom of the Virgin who bare him, [the Son of God] was filling all creation as God, and was enthroned with Him who begat Him." If Cyril, Nestorius' chief opponent, is suspected of Nestorianism, perhaps we have misunderstood what true Nestorianism was and is. The extra Calvinisticum is of a piece with catholic Christology; it seems difficult to make the case that it is a Nestorian (or else Docetic) distortion.

---

[60]Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 204-205.

[61]Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*, 610.

[62]E. David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-Called* Extra Calvinisticum *in Calvin's Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 60.

But what of Moreland and Craig's attempt to preserve something like the extra by means of subliminal knowledge in a single mind? Admittedly it is an imaginative attempt to preserve the tradition on this point. For that, they are to be commended. But question remains as to whether or not this is the most effective way of securing the biblical and traditional position on the cosmic Christ. Are we really to imagine that the Son is unconsciously (or subconsciously) carrying out his divine functions without being self-consciously aware of it? If so, this would seem to introduce several problems. First, it would seem to sever the members of the Trinity. The Father and the Spirit would continue their providential work consciously, but the Son would do so unconsciously. This seems to skirt too close to a tritheism and seems to threaten the unity of trinitarian operations (more on this below). It also seems to introduce a permanent limitation on the Son. If the incarnation demands that the Son be restricted to his human consciousness, and the incarnation is an ongoing reality in the life of the Son, then it seems that the Son would never regain his consciousness of divine functions.[63] In the end, it seems better to maintain the dyothelite scheme because it provides a metaphysical mechanism by which the Son can be both limited (*qua* human) and still continue carry out in a conscious fashion his cosmic functions (*qua* divine).

Trinity

One of the themes of this dissertation is the irreducibly dogmatic nature of the decision to be made between monothelitism and dyothelitism. No single biblical text or Christological theme can alone determine the matter. It is a systematic decision based on

[63]Stephen Davis argues that the Son's kenosis was temporary and came to an end in his exaltation. So, for Davis, kenosis is not metaphysically necessary for the incarnation to obtain, since the Son remains incarnate in his exalted state. He admits that he must appeal to other arguments to explain the coherence of the incarnation of Christ in his exaltation. What, then, is the purchase of the kenotic theory? In the end, Davis argues that it is driven more by biblical than logical concerns. Stephen T. Davis, "The Metaphysics of Kenosis," in *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, ed. Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 114-33.

a variety of factors, including how much weight one gives to the ecumenical councils, how one understands the nature of Christ's human nature, how one relates Christ's volitional life to his soteriological task, and so forth. But perhaps the most pressing dogmatic decision to be made is trinitarian in nature: are we to understand the divine will as singular or plural? Is the Godhead monothelitic or tritheletic? This is simply another way of posing the more fundamental philosophical question involved in this debate: do wills belong to persons or natures? If wills belong to persons, then there are three wills in the Godhead, since there are three divine persons. But if wills belong to natures, then there can only be one divine will, since there is only one divine nature.[64]

Social Trinitarianism. We noted the importance of these trinitarian judgments when we examined various approaches to the Gethsemane Narrative. Dyothelites such as Maximus and Calvin assume that the divine will is singular. As a result, they interpret the volitional tension of Gethsemane in terms of Christ's human will, which is ontologically distinct but finally and functionally one with the divine will. Monothelites such as Moreland and Craig are enabled to interpret the Gethsemane Narrative in a monothelitic fashion precisely because they assume the opposite about the divine will, namely, that it is threefold rather than singular. Jordan Wessling explains the shift that has taken place between these two schools of interpretation:

> The notion that the Godhead has only one will is not as widely held as it once was. If the theologian is open to the idea that there are three distinct wills within the Godhead—one per Father, Son, and Spirit—then he is able to understand Jesus' prayer in a straightforwardly monoethelitic manner. [Garrett] DeWeese, himself a monothelite who affirms a *tri*thelitic account of the divine nature, explains: " The one personal will of Christ who, with human nature and human body was operating as a fully human person, desired the cup of suffering, death, and separation from the Father, to be taken from him. But Christ submitted his (personal) will to the divine will of the Father." In other words, when Jesus says "not my will but yours," the

[64]This assumes that there is at least an analogical relation between human and divine persons, an assumption buttressed by the Second Council of Constantinople's application of Trinitarian categories to the incarnation. The person of Christ is none other than "one of the Holy Trinity."

incarnate Logos submits his (distinct) will to the Father's will.[65]

In short, monothelitism seems to demand some form of social trinitarianism.[66] Social views of the Trinity "emphasize the distinctness of the Trinitarian persons and are critical of western theology's purported emphasis on the unity of the divine nature."[67] Social models understand the three persons of the Godhead in terms of distinct psychological and volitional subjects. Further, social trinitarianism tends "to see in the communion of Father, Son, and Spirit a model of human community." So the Trinity becomes paradigmatic for everything from gender roles in marriage[68] to political economies.[69]

To be sure, there are different varieties of social trinitarianism. Moreland and Craig, following Brian Leftow, list three.[70] *Functional monotheism* is the loosest version of social trinitarianism. In this model, the unity of the divine persons is preserved only in

---

[65]Wessling, "Christology and Conciliar Authority," 154. Wessling is quoting Garrett DeWeese, "One Person, Two Natures," 150. Wessling also explores another option potentially open to monothelites. Even if one assumes that the Godhead is monothelitic, one could perhaps still avoid dyothelitism by explaining the tension Gethsemane only in terms of human *desires* rather than a distinct human will. See Wessling, "Christology and Conciliar Authority," 155. But this view fails to appreciate a principle articulated above, namely, that volitional function implies volitional ontology. How are we to explain conflicting human desires apart from some kind of human psychological and volitional equipage that makes these desires possible?

[66]For a discussion of Social Trinitarianism, see Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004). See also William J. LaDue, *The Trinity Guide to the Trinity* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2003); Fred Sanders, *The Image of the Immanent Trinity: Rahner's Rule and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004); William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 575-88.

[67]Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, "The Trinity and Politics," in *The Oxford Handbook on the Trinity*, ed. Gilles Emery, O.P., and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 534. For a critique of social trinitarianism's claim to the Eastern Fathers over against "Latin Trinitarianism," see Richard Cross, "Two Models of the Trinity?" in *Oxford Readings in Philosophical Theology*, vol. 1, *Trinity, Incarnation, Atonement*, ed. Michael Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 107-126. See also Lewis Ayers, "'Remember That You Are Catholic' (Sermon 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000): 39-82.

[68]For example, see Bruce Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Roles, Relationships, and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005).

[69]For example, see Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005).

[70]Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*, 587-95. For Leftow's discussion, see Brian Leftow, "Anti-Social Trinitarianism," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 203-49.

terms of cooperation. The three persons are seen as distinct substances whose functional unity is logically necessary.[71] *Group mind monotheism* "holds that the Trinity is a mind that is composed of the minds of the three persons in the Godhead." In this model, the three persons are viewed as three "subminds" in the one mind of God.[72] Finally, *trinity monotheism* "holds that while the persons of the Trinity are divine, it is the Trinity as a whole that is properly God." This is the view that Moreland and Craig adopt. Roughly, their model understands the three persons as three parts, which only when taken together make up the whole of what it means to be "God."[73]

Two considerations weigh heavily against social understandings of the Trinity. First, the Christian tradition has historically understood the divine will to be singular. Even before the monothelite controversy, theologians as far back as Justin Martyr and Tertullian argued for a numerically singular divine mind/will.[74] Certainly, the whole sweep of the dyothelite tradition argued in a similar fashion: the will of the Godhead inheres in the divine nature, not the three persons. Maximus made this precise argument in this debate with Pyrrhus. If one argues that wills belong to persons then "because there are three hypostases [in the Godhead] there are also three wills." This view was untenable for Maximus because it implied a distinction of natures within the Godhead (since Maximus defined "nature" in terms of will). Perhaps some theologians will be unfazed by this appeal to church history, but the testimony of the church should at least give one pause before redefining the very nature of God.

---

[71]This version of social trinitarianism seems straightforwardly tritheistic, a charge which Leftow levels against it.

[72]Moreland and Craig, *Philosophical Foundations*, 588.

[73]An obvious weakness of this view is that none of the three persons would be fully divine.

[74]So Justin speaks of the Father as distinct from the Son "numerically" but "not in mind." St. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. Thomas B. Falls, rev. Thomas P. Halton, ed. Michael Slusser (The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 85. Falls' translation renders γνώμη as "mind," but "will" is also an acceptable translation. Tertullian, citing John 5:19, states that the Father and Son share the same will and intention. See the discussion in Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity*, 70-71.

The second, more substantive argument against social trinitarianism is that it tends toward tritheism. Certainly this assessment is true of functional monotheism, which Leftow criticizes as "refined paganism."[75] But even the other "softer" versions of social trinitarianism seem to have difficulty affirming the substantial unity of the Godhead. If the three persons are seen as a community of distinct minds and wills, then what is left of Nicaea's "consubstantial" language? Mind and will have been defined *out of* the divine substance, as it were, and defined *into* the persons. So formally, these views could still affirm a singular divine nature. But functionally, social views understand the three persons as three independent (even if perichoretically cooperating) agents. Social Trinitarians have attempted to answer the tritheistic charge,[76] but it is not entirely clear how they can do so, given the significant revisions to classic trinitarianism their view requires.[77]

Inseparable operations. Related to its social trinitarian tendencies, monothelitism also seems to have difficulty affirming a traditional understanding of the inseparable operations of the Trinity. According to the doctrine of inseparable operations, all of the external works of the Trinity are undivided (*opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*). Augustine provides a classic expression of this doctrine:

> For according to the Catholic faith, the Trinity is proposed to our belief and believed—and even understood by a few saints and holy persons—as so inseparable that whatever action is performed by it must be thought to be performed at the same time by the Father and by the Son and by the Holy Spirit.[78]

In other words, in every act of God outside of himself all three persons of the Godhead

---

[75]Leftow, "Anti Social Trinitarianism," 232.

[76]For example, see Cornelius Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonment*, ed. Cornelius Plantinga and Ronald Feenstra (Southbend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 21-47.

[77]Stephen Holmes has demonstrated how out of step these modern trinitarian views are with the great trinitarian consensus of the patristic, medieval, and Reformation eras. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity*.

[78]Augustine, *Epistle* 11.2, cited in Ayers, "'Remember That You Are Catholic,'" 46.

are at work. The divine persons are not three agents working independently from one another. The three persons are one God, operating together in every act of creation, providence, and redemption. The doctrine of inseparable operations seems to be the logical corollary of Trinitarian monotheism; an undivided divine nature yields undivided divine acts.[79] To be sure, this doctrine must be balanced, so to speak, with another trinitarian principle, namely, the so-called doctrine of divine appropriations, which states that certain acts of the Trinity can be attributed to certain members of the Godhead.[80] The classic example of appropriation is the death of the Son. In order to avoid the heresy of patripassianism, we must affirm that only the Son died on the cross. And yet this doctrine of appropriation does not cancel out the doctrine of inseparable operations. The Father is still at work in the atoning death of Christ, even if it is the Son alone (through his human nature, we should add) who dies upon the cross. Relatedly, the tradition has also maintained a certain *taxis*, or ordering, of the divine acts, which reflects the *taxis* of eternal relations of the immanent Trinity.[81] The Father initiates, the Son carries out, and the Spirit perfects every external act of the Trinity. But again, these personal distinctions in no way diminish the inseparability of the triune operations.

Some versions of contemporary monothelism would seem to have difficulty affirming this traditional doctrine. Kenotic and Spirit Christologies, for example, seem to assume that the Spirit can be at work divinely when the Son is not. During the earthly

---

[79]Stephen Holmes notes that Augustine's "easy assumption of inseparable operations stands firmly in the Latin pro-Nicene tradition, and repeats a central theme developed by Basil and Gregory of Nyssa." Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity*, 132.

[80]For more on the doctrine of appropriation, as it developed in the thought of Hugh of St. Victor and Richard of St. Victor, see Roger E. Olson and Christopher A. Hall, *The Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 58-59.

[81]For a helpful discussion of the *taxis* in the Trinity, especially as it relates to contemporary debates over the eternal subordination of the Son, see Robert Letham, The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 399-401. See also Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son: Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 129-30.

ministry of Jesus, the Son's divinity is "turned off," so to speak. It is left up to the Father and the Spirit to pick up the slack, as it were. According to proponents of Spirit Christology, Jesus' miracles, for instance, are in no way attributable to the Son's intrinsic divinity; they are explicable only in terms of the Spirit's anointing. To be sure, the Son is involved in his miracles, but only as a human conduit. He is active in the miracles in basically the same way as Moses when he lifted his rod at the Red Sea or Elisha when he threw the stick in the water and made the axe head float. But this kenotic understanding of Jesus' miracles seems to pose an obvious Trinitarian problem. Proponents of Spirit Christology maintain that Jesus' miracles were performed not in his own power but in the power of the Spirit. But according to the doctrine of inseparable operations, there is no "power of the Spirit" that is not simultaneously the power of the Son (and of the Father). While certain divine acts can be appropriated to the Holy Spirit, the other persons of the Godhead are not inactive in those acts. The Son is divinely active in the miracles of Jesus no less than the Father and Spirit, though *in his humanity* he is dependent upon the Holy Spirit to extend beyond the limitations of his finitude. So it seems that we have to say two things about the Son at the same time: in any given miracle of Jesus, the Son is both *passive*, as the Spirit-empowered human conduit for God's mighty action, and *active*, as the unchanging Divine Son who is involved, along with the Father and Spirit, in every external work of the Godhead.[82] The Son is not divided into two persons in the miracle, but he is involved in the miracle in two distinct ways, according to his two natures. Monothelitism does not seem to have a way to affirm this duality. Indeed, some proponents of monothelitism are intent upon denying it as a potentially Nestorian

[82]Hawthorne and other kenoticists would likely think that this position skirts too closely to Nestorianism, but such a criticism misses the mark, in my estimation. It is the numerically singular person of the Son who is working in these two ways by virtue of his two natures. There is nothing formally Nestorian about this approach, even if it may seem to tilt in that direction at first blush.

interpretation of Jesus' life and ministry.[83]

Eternal relations within the one divine will. One other Trinitarian issue is worthy of comment. One of the most compelling theological arguments in favor of trinitarian trithelitism (three wills in the Godhead) is the desire to account for the eternal relations of the immanent Trinity. It seems that those who maintain, with the tradition, that the divine will is singular still need to explain how there can be real relations of love within a monothelitic Godhead. They would also need to explain how the divine missions are connected to the eternal relations of origin, why it is that the Son became incarnate and not the Father, and how the economy meaningfully reveals the immanent trinitarian relations.[84] More work needs to be done on these pressing issues, and only a few brief suggestions can be offered here.

First, contemporary theologians should avoid equivocation when comes to the trinitarian term "relation." *Relation* does not equal *relationship* when it comes to the Trinitarian persons, just as *person* does not equal *personality*. Instead, the traditional understanding of "relation" is tied to the relations of personal origin, namely, unbegottenness, begottenness, and procession.[85] To distinguish the persons of the Trinity in terms of "relationships," which require distinct personal wills, is to take a step away from Trinitarian orthodoxy.

Second, when it comes to the relationship between the economic and the immanent Trinity, perhaps we would do well to remember the Augustinian notion of the divine missions. For Augustine, the missions—the sending of the Son and the Spirit—

---

[83]Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power*, 214.

[84]Some of these concerns with the traditional view are expressed in Bruce A. Ware, "Equal in Essence, Distinct in Roles: Eternal Functional Submission among the Essentially Equal Divine Persons of the Godhead," in *The New Evangelical Subordinationism? Perspectives on the Equality of God the Father and God the Son*, ed. Dennis W. Jowers and H. Wayne House (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012),13-38.

[85]Steve Holmes has demonstrated that these and these alone are the traditional distinguishing properties of the divine persons. See Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity*, esp. the summary on pp. 144-146.

are a part of the economy but they accurately reveal the eternal relations of the Godhead. The Son's *being-sent* does not imply inferiority or subordination, but it does reveal the truth that he is *from* the Father from all eternity. Keith Johnson explains Augustine's position,

> In short, because sending merely reveals the generation of the Son, the Son is not in any way inferior to the Father. One of Augustine's central insights is that the economic missions of the Son and the Spirit both reflect and reveal the natures of their eternal relation to the Father. The temporal sending of the Son reveals his eternal generation by the Father while the temporal sending of the Spirit from the Father and Son reveals his eternal procession from the Father and the Son. In this sense, the missions ultimately reveal the Father.[86]

So the *taxis* (order) of the economy reveals something that is true of the eternal relations, but not everything that obtains in one obtains in the other. The Son is eternally *from the Father* in his generation, and he is temporally *from the Father* in his being-sent. There is a *fittingness* to the sending of the Son, but this fittingness does not necessarily imply that the authority/submission structure that obtains in the economy should be read back into the immanent relations. Indeed, because of the doctrine of inseparable operations, we can speak of the Son as being involved in his "sending," no less than the Father, a truth born out by several biblical texts (2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:6-7; Gal 2:20; John 10:18).[87] In sum, those who hold to a singular divine will can still explain the fittingness of the sending of the Son (and not the Father) without resorting to an eternal functional submission of one divine will to another.

Finally, one possible solution to the problem of relations in a monothelitic Godhead lies in a rare distinction drawn by some of the Reformed orthodox with regard to the divine will. Theologians such as Leonard van Rijssen distinguished the *voluntas*

---

[86]Keith E. Johnson, "Trinitarian Agency and the Eternal Subordination of the Son: An Augustinian Perspective," in *The New Evangelical Subordinationism? Perspectives on the Equality of God the Father and God the Son*, ed. Dennis W. Jowers and H. Wayne House (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 117.

[87]Ibid., 126.

essentialis—that is, the singular will of the divine essence—from the *voluntas personalis*—that is, the necessary expression of the divine will in the *ad intra* eternal processions of the Godhead.[88] So there is only one divine will, but the three persons relate to it in distinct ways tied to their distinct personal properties. This distinction might provide a theological mechanism by which we can affirm both the singularity of the divine will and the reality of eternal relations of love in the immanent Trinity. In any event, it is clear that a theologian's position on the monothelite-dyothelite debate has important entailments for his understanding of the volitional life of the Godhead.

Soteriology

Marilyn McCord Adams has suggested that medieval positions on the kind of human nature Christ assumed in the incarnation were determined by the triangulation of three criteria: systematic presumptions, soteriological requirements, and Holy Scripture.[89] In other words, the medievals' perspectives were shaped by the presuppositions of their respective theological systems, the soteriological task they envisioned Jesus fulfilling, and their exegesis of biblical texts. It is the middle of these criteria that concerns us in this section. As we saw in our historical survey, one of the primary motivations for the dyothelite position has been its apparent soteriological utility: dyothelitism helps explain how Christ's work of redemption becomes effective for fallen humanity. Gregory of Nazianzus expressed this soteriological impetus well in his famous axiom: "The unassumed is unhealed." What Gregory applied to the soul more generally, Maximus and the subsequent dyothelite tradition applied to the will specifically: if Christ did not

---

[88]Richard A Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, 4 vols. (Phillipsburgh: P&R, 2003), 3:453.

[89]Marilyn McCord Adams, *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 55. See also Marilyn McCord Adams, *What Sort of Human Nature? The Metaphysics and Systematics of Christology: The Aquinas Lecture, 1999* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1999).

assume a human will, how can our fallen human wills be redeemed? This principle seems to be born out by the teaching of Hebrews:

> For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people (Heb 2:16-17).

Notice the necessity expressed in this text: "he had to." In order to serve as an adequate priestly representative and propitiatory substitute, he had to assume a certain kind of nature, namely, one which made him "like his brothers in every respect." It is no wonder, then, that the Gregorian-Maximian tradition has argued for the Son's assumption a complete human nature—body and soul (including both mind and will). The Reformed tradition's emphasis on Christ's role as the Last Adam and as the federal representative of assumes the same basic logic: Christ is fitted for his mediatorial service by his assumption of all that it means to be a human being, including a human will.

Now perhaps monothelites could argue that since wills inhere in persons not natures, nothing is lost if the Son does not assume a human will. After all, no one who affirms the doctrine of anhypostasis would argue that the Son's failure to assume a distinct human person constitutes a deficiency in his incarnation. The Son brings his own person to the table, so to speak, when he assumes an anhypostatic human nature. The human nature of Christ receives its personhood in the person of the Son. This fact in no way detracts from the Son's full humanity. Similarly, monothelitism could argue that the Son's failure to assume a distinct human will does not detract from his full humanity. In other words, they could argue for the *anthelitic* nature of Christ's human nature; it is "without a will," just as it is "without a person." Likewise, they could argue for an *enthelitc* human nature of Christ; his human nature receives its will in the will of the Son.

Aside from the trinitarian problems that this monothelite redefinition of "nature" and "person" creates, it is also unclear how this position can account for the ways in which the Scriptures speak of the will of Christ vis-à-vis his redemptive work.

As we saw in our discussion of the Gethsemane Narrative, it is precisely as our human representative that Christ struggled volitionally in the garden. It was precisely as a human that he learned obedience through what he suffered (Heb 5:8). It was through a human nature fashioned by God that he "came to do" the will of God (Heb 10:7). These passages cannot prove the dyothelite position beyond doubt, but they do seem to connect Jesus' volitional obedience to his human nature.

Furthermore, if wills belong to persons and Christ, therefore, possesses only one will, then what kind of will is it? Is it a divine will? If so, how could he serve as an adequate representative for human beings? Perhaps in the incarnation, his will is transformed into a human will. But this would require some version of kenoticism with its rejection (or, at least, redefinition) of the *extra Calvinisticum*. Or perhaps one could argue that the will of Christ is kind of hybrid divine-human will. But in this case, we would be left with a kind of volitional Eutychianism, in which the will of the incarnate Christ is neither fully human nor fully divine but a *tertium quid*. These Christological problems can be avoided in a dyothelite account. In the dyothelite scheme, the Son retains his divine will, which he shares eternally with the Father and the Spirit, and in his incarnation he assumes a discrete human will, on account of which he is adequately suited to serve as our representative and substitute.

Conclusion

The case for dyothelitism, then, is systematic and cumulative in nature. Hence, this dissertation has offered a *dogmatic* defense of the two-wills position. The relevant biblical texts—the Gethsemane Narrative, John 6, and Hebrews 10—emphasize the Son's human will, which is distinguished from the will of the Father (that is, the divine will). A dyothelite interpretation of these texts is demanded provided one assumes the unity of the divine will and the Son's fully functioning divine nature even in his incarnate state (that is, the *extra Calvinisticum*). This two-wills position is the majority report in church

history stretching back at least to the seventh century but with precedents in the earliest centuries of Christian reflection on the person of Christ. Thus, for biblical, theological, and historical reasons, it seems best not to depart from the dyothelite position. Contemporary monothelitism raises some important questions and attempts to construct a model of the incarnation that is grounded in Scripture and sensitive to the first four ecumenical councils. But in the end, it creates more Christological problems than it solves. The ancient and well-worn paths of dyothelitism provide for a more sure-footed journey through the complexities of Christology.

I wish to close with some reflections of a more personal and pastoral nature. Throughout the completion of this dissertation, I have often been asked by well-meaning Christians, "Why is this topic important?" They rightly want to know what this topic has to do with the gospel and with the Christian life. My response has probably been inadequate, but I offer a version of it here. A defense of the two wills position is important quite simply because our salvation is at stake. If Christ did not assume a human will, how can my fallen human will be redeemed and restored? Christ overturns the curse of sin at precisely the locus where it was unleashed on the cosmos, namely, at the level of human volition. Christ *wills* salvation through a human *will* on behalf of human *wills*. In doing so, he renders perfect obedience to the Father, which is then imputed to our account by faith. He also leaves us an example of what it means to pray—and live out!—the third petition of the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done." When my will falls yet again to sin and vice, I would be left hopeless were it not for Christ's perfect volitional record. He never exercised his will for anything other than complete and total obedience to the Father. My salvation rests upon this certain foundation: that Christ has willed perfect human obedience as my representative and substitute. I close with a hymn that beautifully expresses the practical effects of this glorious truth.

My God and Father! while I stray,

Far from my home in life's rough way,
Oh! teach me from my heart to say,
"Thy will be done!" "Thy will be done!"

If Thou shouldst call me to resign,
What most I prize, it ne'er was mine.
I only yield Thee what was Thine;
"Thy will be done!" "Thy will be done!"

If but my fainting heart be blest,
With Thy sweet Spirit for its guest,
My God! To Thee I leave the rest,
"Thy will be done!" "Thy will be done!"

Renew my will from day to day,
Blend it with Thine, and take away,
All now that makes it hard to say,
"Thy will be done!" "Thy will be done!"

Then when on earth I breathe no more,
The prayer oft mixed with tears before,
I'll sing upon a happier shore,
"Thy will be done!" "Thy will be done!"[90]

[90]Words by Charlotte Elliot, music by Justin Smith ©2009 Justin Smith Music.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Achtemeier, P. Mark. "Natural Science and Christian Faith in the Thought of T. F. Torrance." In *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T. F. Torrance*, edited by Elmer M. Colyer, 269-302. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001.

Adams, Marilyn McCord. *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____. *What Sort of Human Nature?Medieval Philosophy and the Systematics of Christology*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1999.

Allen, R. Michael. *The Christ's Faith: A Dogmatic Account*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2009.

Allison, Dale C., Jr.. *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005,

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica*, 2 vols. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Edited by Daniel J. Sullivan. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952.

Augustine. *City of God*. Translated by Marcus Dods. New York: Random House, 1999.

_____. *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*. Edited by Thomas S. Hibbs. Washington: Regnery, 1996.

Ayers, Lewis. "'Remember That You Are Catholic' (Sermon 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God.531-33," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000): 39-82.

Barth, Karl *Church Dogmatics*, 4 vols. New York: T&T Clark, 2009.

Barth, Karl, and Eduard Thurneysen. *Revolutionary Theology in the Making: Barth-Thurneysen Correspondence, 1914-1925*. Translated by James D. Smart. Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1964.

Barthellos, Demetrios. *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus Confessor*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Barton, Emil. *Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007.

Bathrellos, Demtrios. *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Bauckham, Richard. *Jesus and the God of Israel:* God Crucified *and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Bauerschmidt, Frederick Christian. "The Trinty and Politics." In *The Oxford Handbook on the Trinity*, edited by Gilles Emery, O.P., and Matthew Levering, 531-33. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003-2008.

Bebbington, David W. *Baptists Through the Centuries: A Global History*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010.

Beeley, Christopher A. *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Beeley, Christopher A., ed., *Re-Reading Gregory of Nazianzus: Essays on History, Theology, and Culture*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012.

Boff, Leonardo. *Trinity and Society*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005.

Borchardt, C. F. A. *Hilary of Poitiers' Role in the Arian Struggle*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966.

Børtnes, Jostein, and Thomas Hägg, eds. *Gregory of Nazianzus: Images and Reflections*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2006.

Brown, Harold O. J. *Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988.

Brown, Raymond E. *The Death of Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*. New York: Doubleday, 1994.

Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

Calvin, John. *A Commentary on A Harmony of the Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. Translated by William Pringle. In *Calvin's Commentaries*. 22 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.

_____. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960.

Cary, Phillip. "The New Evangelical Subordinationism: Reading Inequality into the Trinity." In *The New Evangelical Subordinationism? Perspectives on the Equality of God the Father and God the Son*. Edited by Dennis W. Jowers and H. Wayne House, 1-12. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012.

Clark, R. Scott. *Recovering the Reformed Confession: Our Theology, Piety and Practice*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008.

Coakley, Sarah. "What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not? Some Reflections in the Status and Meaning of the Chalcedonian 'Definition.'" In *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*, edited by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, S.J., and Gerald O'Collins, S.J., 143-63. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Cooper, John W. *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Crisp, Oliver D. *An American Augustinian: Sin and Salvation in the Dogmatic Theology of William G. T. Shedd*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007.

_____. *Divinity and Humanity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

_____. *God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology*. London: T. & T. Clark, 2009.

_____. "Original Sin and Atonement." In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, edited by Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea, 430-51. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

_____. *Retrieving Doctrine: Essays in Reformed Theology*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011.

_____. *Revisioning Christology: Theology in the Reformed Tradition*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011.

_____. "Scholastic Theology, Augustinian Realism and Original Guilt." *European Journal of Theology* 13, no. 1 (2004): 17-28.

Crisp, Oliver D., and Michael C. Rea, eds. *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Cross, F. L., and E. A. Livingstone, eds. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Cross, Richard. *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

_____. "Two Models of the Trinity?" In *Oxford Readings in Philosophical Theology*, Micahel Rea, 107-26. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Daly, Brian E., S.J. *Gregory of Nazianzus* London: Routledge, 2006.

Davidson, Ivor J. "'Not My Will but Yours Be Done': The Ontological Dynamics of Incarnational Intention." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7, no. 2 (April 2005): 178-204.

Davies, W. D., and Dale C. Allison, Jr. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew*, 3 volumes. International Critical Commentary. London: T&T Clark, 1997-2004.

Davis, Leo Donald, S.J. *The First Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History Theology*. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazer, 1983. Reprint, Collegeville, MN:

Liturgical, 1990.

Davis, Stephen T. "Is Kenosis Orthodox?" In *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying God*, edited by C. Stephen Evans, 112-38. Oxford: Oxford University, 2006.

_____. "The Metaphysics of Kenosis." In *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, edited by Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill, 114-33. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Denault, Pascal. *The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology: A Comparison between Seventeenth-Century Particular Baptist and Paedobaptist Federalism*. Translated by Mac Wigfield and Elizabeth Wigfield. Birmingham: Solid Ground, 2013.

DeWeese, Garrett J. "One Person, Two Natures: Two Metaphysical Models of the Incarnation." In *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*, edited by Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler, 114-53. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007.

Edmonson, Stephen. *Calvin's Christology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Edwards, James R. *The Gospel according to Mark*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

Eire, Carolos M. N. "Calvin's Attack on Idolatry." In *John Calvin and the Church: A Prism of Reform*, edited byTimothy George. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990.

Erickson, Millard J. *Who's Tampering with the Trinity? An Assessment of the Subordination Debate*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009.

_____. *The Word Became Flesh: A Contemporary Incarnational Christology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991.

Evans, C. Stephen, ed. *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying God*. Oxford: Oxford University, 2006.

_____. "The Self-Emptying of Love: Some Thoughts on Kenotic Christology." In *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*, edited by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, S.J., and Gerald O'Collins, S.J., 246-72. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Fee, Gordon D. "The New Testament and Kenosis Christology." In *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God*, edited by C. Stephen Evans, 1-24. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Feenstra Ronald J., and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., eds. *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays*. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989.

Finger, Thomas N. *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, Historical, Constructive*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004.

Forsyth, Peter T. *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ*. Boston: Pilgrim, 1909.

Frame, John. *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987.

France, R. T. *The Gospel of Matthew*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.

_____. *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1989.

Gathercole, Simon J. *The Pre-existent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

George, Timothy. "John Gill." In *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, edited by Timothy George and David S. Dockery, 11-33. Nashville: B&H, 2001.

Giles, Kevin. *The Eternal Generation of the Son: Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012.

_____. *Jesus and the Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.

Gill, John. *A Body of Doctrinal Divinity*. London: M. & S. Higham, 1839. Reprint, Paris, AR: Baptist Standard Bearer, 1984.

_____. *An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 9 vols. London: Mathews & Leigh, 1810. Reprint, Paris, AR: Baptist Standard Bearer, 1989.

_____. *Gill's Commentary*. 6 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980.

Glock, Hans-Johann. *What Is Analytic Philosophy?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Gonzalez, Justo L. *A History of Christian Thought, Volume II: From Augustine to the Eve of the Reformation*, revised edition. Nashville: Abingdon, 1987.

Grant, Robert M. *Irenaeus of Lyons*. The Early Church Fathers. Abingdon: Routledge, 1997.

Green, Joel B., and Stuart L. Palmer, eds. *In Search of the Soul: Four Views on the Mind-Body Problem*. Downers Grove, 2005.

Gregory of Nazianzus. "The Fourth Theological Oration—Which Is the Second on the Son." In *Christology of the Later Fathers*, edited by Edward R. Hardy. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1954.

_____. "To Cledonius Against Apollinaris (Epistle 101)." In *Christology of the Later Fathers*, edited by Edward R. Hardy. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1954.

Grenz, Stanley J. *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004.

Grillmeier, Aloys. *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*. Translated by John Bowden. Atlanta: John Knox, 1964.

Grislis, Egil. "The Doctrine of the Incarnation according to Menno Simons." *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 8 (1990): 16-33.

Gritsch, Eric W. and Robert W. Jenson. *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1976.

Guthrie, George H. "Hebrews." In *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, edited by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, 919-96. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.

Habets, Myk. *Theology in Transposition: A Constructive Appraisal of T. F. Torrance*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013.

_____. *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance: Not Yet in the Now*. London: Ashgate, 2009.

Hardy, Edward R., ed. *Christology of the Later Fathers*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1954.

Hawthorne, Gerald. *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus*. Dallas: Word, 1991.

Haykin, Michael A. G. *Kiffin, Knollys, and Keach: Rediscovering Our English Baptist Heritage*. Leeds: Carey, 1996.

_____., ed. *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697-1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation*. Leiden: Brill, 1997.

Heine, Ronald E. *Origen: Scholarship in Service of the Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Helm, Paul. *John Calvin's Ideas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Hick, John. "The Logic of God Incarnate." *Religious Studies* 25, no. 4 (December 1989): 409-23.

Hilary of Poitiers. *The Trinity*. Translated by Stephen McKenna. Fathers of the Church, vol. 25. New York: Fathers of the Church, 1954.

Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theoology*, 3 vols. New York: Scribners, 1872-73. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.

Holmes, Stephen R. *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012.

Horrell, J. Scott. "The Eternal Son of God in the Social Trinity." In *Jesus and Trinitarian Perspective*, edited by Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler, 44-79. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007.

Hovorun, Cyril. *Will, Action and Freedom: Christological Controversies in the Seventh Century*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.

Hunsinger, George. "The Dimension of Depth: Thomas F. Torrance on the Sacraments of

Baptism and the Lord's Supper." In *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology: Theologians in Dialogue with T. F. Torrance*, edited by Elmer M. Colyer, 139-60. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001.

Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, 3 vols. Translated by Dominic J. Unger. New York: Newman, 2012.

_____. *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*. Translated by J. Armitage Robinson. London: SPCK, 1920.

Issler, Klaus. "Jesus Example: Prototype of the Dependent, Spirit-Filled Life." In *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective*, edited by Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler, 189-225. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007.

Jansen, J. F. *Calvin's Doctrine of the Work of Christ*. London: James Clark, 1956.

Jerome. *Commentary on Matthew*. Translated by Thomas P. Scheck. Fathers of the Church 117. Washington, DC: Catholic University Press of America, 2008.

Hick, John. "The Logic of God Incarnate," *Religious Studies* 25: 409-23.

John of Damascus, *Writings*. Translated by Frederic H. Chase, Jr. Fathers of the Church. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1958.

Johnson, Keith E. "Trinitarian Agency and the Eternal Subordination of the Son: An Augustinian Perspective." In *The New Evangelical Subordinationism? Perspectives on the Equality of God the Father and God the Son*. Edited by Dennis W. Jowers and H. Wayne House, 108-32. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012.

Jones, Paul Dafydd. *The Humanity of Christ: Christology in Karl Barth's* Church Dogmatics. London: T&T Clark, 2008.

Jowers, Dennis W. and H. Wayne House. *The New Evangelical Subordinationism? Perspectives on the Equality of God the Father and God the Son*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012.

Justin Martyr. *Dialogue with Trypho*. Translated by Thomas B. Falls. Revised by Thomas P. Halton. Edited by Michael Slusser. The Catholic University of America Press, 2003.

Knight, George William. *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.

LaDue, William J. *The Trinity Guide to the Trinity*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2003.

Leftow, Brian. "Anti-Social Trinitarianism." In *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, edited by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins, 203-49. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

_____. "A Timeless God Incarnate." In *The Incarnation*, edited by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins, 273-99. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Leith, John. *Creeds of the Churches*. Edited by John Leith. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1982.

Letham, Robert. *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004.

Lewis, Gordon R. and Bruce A. Demarest. *Integrative Theology*, 4 volumes. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990-1996.

Louth, Andrew. *Maximus the Confessor*. London: Routledge, 1996.

_____. *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Luz, Ulrich. *Matthew 21-28*. Edited by Helmut Kloester. Translated by James E. Crouch. Hermeneia. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005.

Mackintosh, Hugh R. *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1912.

Macquarrie, John. *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought*. London: SCM, 1990.

Marmodoro, Anna, and Jonathan Hill. *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Marshall, I. Howard. *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.

Maximus the Confessor. *Disputation with Pyrrhus*. Translated by Joseph P. Farrell. Waymart, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1990.

_____. *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*. Translated by Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken. New York: St.Vladimir's Press, 2003.

McCall, Thomas H. *Forsaken: The Trinity and the Cross, And Why It Matters*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012), 28-29.

McFarland, Ian A. *In Adam's Fall: A Meditation on the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

_____. "Willing is Not Choosing: Some Anthropological Implications of Dyothelite Christology." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, no. 1 (January 2007): 3-23.

McGrath, Alister E. *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundations of Doctrinal Criticism*, 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

_____. *Thomas F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999.

McGuckin, John A., ed. *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004.

McLeod, Frederick. *Theodore of Mopsuestia*. London: Routledge, 2009.

Meyendorff, John. *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975.

Molnar, Paul D. *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2009.

Moreland, J. P., and William Lane Craig. *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2003.

Morris, Thomas. *The Logic of God Incarnate*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001.

Muller, Richard A. *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

_____. "John Gill and the Reformed Tradition: A Study in the Reception of Protestant Orthodoxy in the Eighteenth Century." In *The Life and Thought of John Gill: A Tercentennial Appreciation*, edited by Michael A. G. Haykin, 51-68. Leiden: Brill, 1997.

_____. *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987-2003.

Murray, John. *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1959.

Nagel, Thomas. *The View from Nowhere*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Nettles, Thomas J. *The Baptists: Key People Involved in Forming a Baptist Identity—Volume One: Beginnings in Britain*. Fearn, Ross-Shire, Scotland: Mentor, 2005.

_____. *Teaching Truth, Training Hearts: The Study of Catechisms in Baptist Life*. Amityville, NY: Calvary, 1998.

O'Brien, Peter T. *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.

_____. *The Letter to the Hebrews*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

O'Collins, Gerald, S.J., and Michael Keenan Jones, eds. *Jesus Our Priest: A Christian Approach to the Priesthood of Christ*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Oden, Thomas C. "Nicea and Evangelical Confession." In *Evangelicals and the Nicene Faith: Reclaiming the Apostolic Witness*. Edited by Timothy George, 3-19. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.

Oliver, Robert W. *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists, 1771-1892: From John Gill to C. H. Spurgeon*. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2006.

Olson Roger E., and Christopher A. Hall. *The Trinity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

Origen. *Contra Celsum*. Translated by Henry Chadwick. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953.

Osborn, Eric. *Irenaeus of Lyons*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Rev. ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006.

Ostrogorsky, George. *History of the Byzantine State*, revised edition. Translated by Joan Hussey. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1969.

Owen, John. *Christologia*. Vol. 1 of *The Works of John Owen*. Edited by William H. Goold. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000.

Packer, J. I. "Free Will." In *The Westminster Handbook to Reformed Theology*, edited by Donald K. McKim, 86-87. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001.

Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Jesus—God and Man*. Translated by Lewis L. Wilkens and Duane A. Priebe. London: SCM, 1968.

Partee, Charles. *The Theology of John Calvin*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine 2: The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Peterson, Robert A. *Salvation Accomplished by the Son: The Work of Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011.

Plantinga, Alvin. "On Heresy, Mind, and Truth." *Faith and Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (April 1999): 182-93.

Plantinga, Cornelius. "Social Trinity and Tritheism." In *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonment*, ed. Cornelius Plantinga and Ronald Feenstra, 21-47. Southbend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989.

Raitt, Jill. "Calvin's Use of *Persona*," in *Calvinus Ecclesiae Genevensis Custos*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser, 273-87. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1984.

Rebenich, Stefan. *Jerome*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Rolnick, Philip A. *Person, Grace, and God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.

Sanders, Fred. *The Image of the Immanent Trinity: Rahner's Rule and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture*. New York: Peter Lang, 2004.

Schaff, Philip, ed. *Creeds of Christendom*. Vol. 3, *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1919.

Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *The Christian Faith*. Translated by Hugh R. Mackintosh. London: T. & T. Clark, 1999.

Schrenk, Gottlob "θέλω, θέλημα, θέλησις." In *Theological Dictionary of the New*

Testament. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 3:44-62. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965.

Senor, Thomas. "An Ecumenical Kenotic Christology." In *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, edited by Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill, 88-113. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Shedd, William G. T. *Dogmatic Theology*. 3rd ed. Edited by Alan W. Gomes. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2003.

Stamps, Robert J. *The Sacrament of the Word Made Flesh: The Eucharistic Theology of Thomas F. Torrance*. Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2007.

Sturch, Richard. *The Word and the Christ: An Essay in Analytic Christology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Swinburne, Richard. *The Christian God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Thompson, Thomas R. "Nineteenth-Century Kenotic Christology: The Waxing, Waning, and Weighing of a Quest for a Coherent Christology." In *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying God*, edited by C. Stephen Evans, 74-111. Oxford: Oxford University, 2006.

Thompson, Thomas R., and Cornelius Plantinga Jr. "Trinity and Kenosis." In *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying God*, edited by C. Stephen Evans, 165-89. Oxford: Oxford University, 2006.

Torbet, Robert G. *A History of the Baptists*, 3rd edition. Valley Forge: Judson, 1963.

Torrance, Thomas F. *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ*. Edited by Robert T. Walker. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009.

_____. *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being, Three Persons*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996.

_____. *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*. Edited by Robert T. Walker. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008.

_____. *Reality and Scientific Theology*. Reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001.

_____. *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church.* Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988.

_____. *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement.* Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994.

Trigg, Joseph W. *Origen*. London: Routledge, 1998.

van Driel, Edwin Christiaan. *Incarnation Anyway: Arguments for Supralapsarian Christology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical and Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005.

Vanhoye, Albert. *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest according to the New Testament*. Petersham, MA: St. Bede's, 1986.

Verghese, Paul. "The Monothelite Controversy: A Historical Survey." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 13 (1968): 196-208.

Vermigli, Peter Martyr. *Dialogue on the Two Natures in Christ*. Translated by John Patrick Donnelly, S.J. Kirksville, MO: The Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1995.

Ware, Bruce A. "Equal in Essence, Distinct in Roles: Eternal Functional Authority and Submission among the Essentially Equal Divine Persons of the Godhead." In *The New Evangelical Subordinationism? Perspectives on the Equality of God the Father and God the Son*. Edited by Dennis W. Jowers and H. Wayne House, 13-38. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012.

_____. *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Roles, Relationships, and Relevance*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005.

_____. *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.

Watts, Thomas A. "Two Wills in Christ? Contemporary Objections Considered in Light of a Critical Examination of Maximus the Confessor's *Disputation with Pyrrhus*" *Westminster Theological Journal* 71 (2009): 455-87.

Wawrykow, Joseph P., ed. *The Westminster Handbook to Thomas Aquinas*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005.

Webster, John. "Theologies of Retrieval." In *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, edited by John Webster, Kathryn Tanner and Iain Torrance, 583-99. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Weedman, Mark. *The Trinitarian Theology of Hilary of Poitiers*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Wendel, François. *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*. Translated by Philip Mairet. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1995.

Wessling, Jordan. "Christology and Conciliar Authority: On the Viability of Monothelitism for Protestant Theology." In *Christology, Ancient and Modern: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, edited by Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, 151-70. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.

Willis, E. David. *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-Called* Extra Calvinisticum *in Calvin's Theology*. Leiden: Brill, 1966.

Young, Stephen E. *Jesus Tradition in the Apostolic Fathers: Their Explicit Appeals to the Words of Jesus in Light of Orality Studies*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011.

ABSTRACT

"THY WILL BE DONE":
A DOGMATIC DEFENSE OF DYOTHELITISM IN LIGHT OF RECENT MONOTHELITE PROPOSALS

Robert Lucas Stamps, Ph.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, May 2014
Chair: Dr. Stephen J. Wellum

In the seventh century, the Third Council of Constantinople (AD 680-81) denounced monothelitism, the belief that the incarnate Christ has only one will. Consequently, the dyothelite (two wills) position became accepted orthodoxy in all three branches of Christian theology: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant. But in recent decades, several Christian philosophers and theologians have called into question the church's conciliar view on the volitional life of Christ. For various reasons, these scholars believe that the one-will view better accounts for the unity of Christ's person and the coherency of his Incarnation. This dissertation analyzes three overlapping categories of contemporary monothelitism: abstractist Christologies, kenotic Christologies, and Spirit Christologies (chapter 2). It then seeks to retrieve the biblical and theological rationale of the dyothelite tradition. After surveying the emergence of the dyothelite consensus in the Patristic and mediaeval eras (chapter 3), special consideration is given to

four Reformed theologians, who each defended the dyothelite position as a part of his broader Christological program: John Calvin, John Gill, William G. T. Shedd, and Thomas F. Torrance (chapter 4). It is concluded that the case for dyothelitism is cumulative and systematic in nature, taking into consideration not only the witnesses of Scripture and tradition, but also the implications of the debate for various loci of systematic theology (chapter 5).

VITA

Robert Lucas Stamps

EDUCATION

B.A., Auburn University, 2004
M.Div., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008

ORGANIZATIONS

The Evangelical Theological Society
The Evangelical Philosophical Society

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, California Baptist University, Online and Professional Studies Division, Riverside, California, 2012-

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Pastor, New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, Caneyville, Kentucky, 2005-2008
Youth Ministry Intern, Second Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Tennessee, 2003
Youth Ministry Intern, Lakeview Baptist Church, Auburn, Alabama, 2002
Summer Missionary, International Mission Board, East Asia, 2002