



# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

# **Our Chalcedonian Selves:**

How Traditional Christology Informs Constructive Approaches to  
Theology and Psychology

By James Thieke



THE UNIVERSITY  
*of* EDINBURGH

Doctoral Thesis  
School of Divinity  
Science and Religion  
6 June 2022

## **Abstract**

This thesis employs traditional Chalcedonian Christology to construct a new, interdisciplinary method for understanding our humanity that is capable of robust engagement with modern conceptions of humanity derived from psychological research. Drawing on Christological ideas developed in the patristic era, I argue that our humanity must first be understood in light of Christ's own relationship with both humanity and divinity. This method not only provides new avenues for conceptually relating theology and psychology, but it can also inform constructive approaches to investigating humanity and the God-human relationship within the science-theology discourse. Specifically, this thesis applies the new Christological method to two psychological subdisciplines – childhood developmental psychology and empirical psychotherapy – to craft a theologically grounded and pragmatic approach to the concepts of early childhood and mental well-being. The resulting analysis poses significant implications not only to the science-theology discourse, but also to pastoral and practical theology, as well as psychology and theological anthropology.

## **Lay Summary**

Science and Christian theology both ask the question: what does it mean to be human? Though the ways they approach this question differ, I argue that their perspectives can be reconciled by looking at how theology understands the person of Jesus Christ. Traditionally, Christians have understood Jesus Christ as fully revealing what it means to be human. This means that starting with Jesus Christ can change many conversations scientists and theologians have about key issues of humanity. Furthermore, Jesus Christ is traditionally understood to be fully God and fully human, and thus reveals how humanity relates to the divine. I use this traditional understanding as a model for how psychology, as a scientific discipline which studies humanity, can relate to theology, as the traditional discipline for studying God. Building on this model, I explore how to bring together psychology and theology on two issues: childhood and mental health. First, I argue that understanding how young children form relationships, think, and learn is instructive for how to become a child of God. Second, I argue that understanding the psychological aspect of Christ's crucifixion sheds light on how psychotherapy can best bring about mental health in patients.

## **Statement of Own Work**

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

An earlier version of Chapter 2 has been published in pre-print form online open access in *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* under the title “Energies and Personhood: A Christological Perspective on Human Identity” (<https://doi.org/10.1111/zygo.12795>). An earlier version of Chapter 4 is in press for publication in the edited volume *Creative Pluralism? Images and models in science and religion* as part of Springer's *Issues in Science and Theology* series, with the title “Christology, Psychology, and Participation: A Model for Relating Psychological and Theological Understandings of Humanity” – all reused content is reproduced with permission from Springer Nature.

Signed: James Robert Thieke

6 June 2022

## **Acknowledgements**

I am so very grateful to the many people who have helped me along the path to finishing this thesis, and I would like to thank as many of them as I am able here. My supervisors, Prof. Mark Harris and the Rev. Dr. Michael Fuller, have encouraged, guided, and supported me throughout this entire process, through the many incarnations of my scholarly ideas and arguments, and I owe them all my gratitude; defending my work against their cross-examinations in our meetings has prepared me for academic debate more than anything else. I also want to thank the rest of the staff at the School of Divinity, both for the countless casual encounters that helped nudge my thinking in one direction or another, and for modeling to me great examples of academic professionals who delight in their work and in their students – my desire to pursue academic enquiry was born from the inspirational environment New College has fostered. My ability to conduct this project was also greatly assisted by receiving the School of Divinity Research Scholarship, for which I thank the School profusely. I also thank my many friends whom I have met these past five years at New College, both for pushing me intellectually in our conversations and for being a source of fellowship, encouragement, and joy.

My family has been unfailingly supportive of me throughout my doctoral years. I thank my parents, for always being willing to discuss my research ideas; my sister, for her encouragement and praise of my Ph.D. skills; and my in-laws, for generously hosting me with space to work during the most difficult months of the pandemic and my early parenthood. But above all, I wish to thank my wife, Lucy, for her constant and enthusiastic confidence in my ability to complete this thesis and to be an academic. In my many times of doubt, confusion, conceptual difficulties, and exhaustion, she has been a driving force in pushing me through towards success. This thesis is dedicated to her and to our children born during these Ph.D. years, as they have been and will always be the examples to me of Christ-like living in human beings.

Finally, I would like to thank Jesus Christ, my Lord and my God: first for sending me to Edinburgh in the first place, an act I can now see had to be divine providence; then for leading me to this Ph.D. and my wife in one move; and lastly for deigning to be central to this thesis. May my words be acceptable to the Word.

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
Beginning with Two Turns .....	1
Reviewing the Science-Theology Landscape .....	4
The Choice of Traditional Chalcedonian Christology .....	8
The Aims and Structure of this Thesis.....	12
<b>PART 1: CHRIST AS AXIOM</b> .....	15
<b>Chapter 1: A Christological Approach to Three Science-Theology Conversations about Humanity</b> .....	16
Humanity and the Image of God.....	16
Humanity and Personhood.....	28
Humanity and the Mind/Soul-Body Relationship.....	37
<b>Chapter 2: Human Nature and Personhood in Christology</b> .....	48
The Christological Distinction between Personhood and Human Nature .....	49
The Implications of the Person-Nature Distinction for Science and Theology .....	54
A Proposal: Humanity Constituted by Natural Energies .....	65
What is Personhood?.....	72
<b>PART 2: CHRIST AS METHOD</b> .....	79
<b>Chapter 3: Christology and the God-World Relationship</b> .....	80
<i>Christ and the Created Order</i> – Analysis and Response .....	81
<i>Incarnation</i> – Analysis and Response.....	91
<i>The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis</i> – Analysis and Response .....	100
Overall Response – <i>Christ the Heart of Creation</i> .....	111
<b>Chapter 4: A Christological Method for Relating Theology and Psychology</b> .....	118
Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger: Differentiation, Unity, & Order .....	122

Methodological Responses to Hunsinger.....	128
Participation and Personhood as Keys to the Psychology-Theology Relationship .....	144
<b>PART 3: CHRIST AS END .....</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Application 1 – Christological Filiation and Childhood Developmental Psychology .....</b>	<b>158</b>
Background: Theology of Childhood .....	160
Attachment Theory and Personal Relationships .....	167
Cognitive Development and the Mind of Christ.....	183
<b>Chapter 6: Application 2 – Psychology of Mental Well-Being and Christ Crucified.....</b>	<b>200</b>
Background.....	204
Khaled Anatolios on Doxological Contrition .....	210
Aaron Beck and Cognitive Therapy .....	219
Martin Seligman and Positive Psychology .....	228
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>247</b>
Works Cited by Chapter.....	247
Full Bibliography .....	257

**Word Count:** 90,933 words

## Introduction

*“What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?  
Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.”<sup>1</sup>*

What does it mean to be human? Ask a dozen scholars this question and you may get three dozen answers. It is a question that has apparently been asked since ancient times, and surveying the history of reflection on this topic, it appears that modern perspectives have multiplied rather than coalesced. The difficulty in addressing this question lies partly in the diversity of disciplines that purport to contribute knowledge towards our understanding of humanity, and additionally in the resulting diversity of those disciplines’ claims. Hence, there is a robust discussion in the science-theology discourse about how scientific and theological perspectives contribute to our overall understanding of humanity, and how such perspectives relate to one another.

This thesis contributes to this discussion by bringing together psychological and theological perspectives on humanity, but it does so by framing the discussion within a Christological perspective. As the title “Our Chalcedonian Selves” implies, this thesis addresses the question of what it means to be human by looking to Chalcedonian Christology. In this thesis, I construct a new, interdisciplinary method for understanding our humanity that is grounded in the claims of traditional Chalcedonian Christology and is capable of robust engagement with conceptions of humanity derived from modern psychological research. This project aims to reconsider much of the science-theology discourse on humanity by making Christology central to anthropological claims, but it also seeks to further that discourse by constructively applying my Christological method in the final two chapters to questions of the relationship between specific theological and psychological claims surrounding childhood and mental health.

### Beginning with Two Turns

I begin by exploring the scholarly foundations for justifying the construction of such a Christological method. In the science-theology discourse, Sarah Lane Ritchie notes a

---

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 8:4-5, NRSV. Quoted in Hebrews 2:6-7, with slightly different wording in NRSV. I chose this epigraph as the Psalm verses’ use in Hebrews is understood as having a Christological intention. This quoting thus implies that Christology and the question of what it means to be human are intimately connected.

“theological turn” in the debate surrounding divine action. Ritchie argues that, for scholars of the theological turn, a full account of the natural world must include a theological account of God’s active presence.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the natural world cannot be analyzed separately from its relationship with God. Rather than envisaging nature as an autonomous entity upon which God must act externally, Ritchie claims that to be fully natural is to participate in God – to claim otherwise is to remove nature’s own ontological context.<sup>3</sup> Such a move reframes the divine action debate in explicitly theological terms<sup>4</sup> – Ritchie writes that “the upshot of all this is that those in the theological turn are often able to affirm a more expansive and far-reaching account of divine activity in the world – precisely because this activity is no longer dependent on current gaps in scientific knowledge, but a theological model that affirms an inherently interactive relationship between God and all the natural world.”<sup>5</sup> The theological turn recognizes the theological moorings of the natural world, and thus emphasizes the inherent interconnection between scientific claims about nature and theological claims about God’s action, yielding creative approaches to old debates.

Meanwhile, in the field of theological anthropology, Marc Cortez notes a “Christocentric turn” in which scholars acknowledge that Jesus Christ must be central for understanding the human person.<sup>6</sup> Cortez writes that “a growing number of Christian theologians locate modernity’s inability to understand human nature in the fundamentally misguided attempt to derive a complete picture of the human person independently of the perspective provided by the person of Jesus Christ.”<sup>7</sup> The focus of the Christocentric turn is that Jesus Christ alone reveals true humanity, and to investigate anthropological claims without reference to Christ yields a “distorted picture.”<sup>8</sup> Cortez argues that the field of theological anthropology must thus engage with scientific research on humanity from a Christocentric perspective<sup>9</sup> – and he argues that, far from constraining scientific contributions to such an engagement, a Christological approach

---

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Lane Ritchie, *Divine Action and the Human Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 193.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>6</sup> Marc Cortez, *Embodied Souls, Ensouled Bodies: An Exercise in Christological Anthropology and Its Significance for the Mind/Body Debate* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 189.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

actually enables other disciplines to have their insights valued and recognized.<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere, Cortez argues specifically for the welcome input of scientific and psychological perspectives on humanity, as long as each disciplinary perspective remains within the limits of its purview: such an argument flags up the necessary issue of identifying the boundaries of scientific claims as well as theological claims in interdisciplinary discussions.<sup>11</sup> Cortez writes: “When dealing with anthropological phenomena, Christology does not provide a definitive ‘answer’ to how those should be understood; instead, it is more rightly understood as a way of thinking about and interpreting that data... non-theological interpretations of the phenomena will not be Christologically invalid from the beginning, and will instead offer important perspectives on being human that theological anthropology can and must engage.”<sup>12</sup>

These two turns – the theological turn in the divine action debate, and the Christocentric turn in the field of theological anthropology – have a significant overlapping relevance to the science-theology discourse on humanity, and thus I follow the direction of both turns so as to contribute to this discourse. Following the Christocentric turn, I acknowledge Jesus Christ as central to understanding what it means to be human – and then following the theological turn, I argue that this Christological account of humanity is fundamental to showing how scientific and theological perspectives on humanity are inherently interconnected in a participatory relationship. Basically, a full account of what it means to be human must include a theological account of Christ’s revelation of true humanity, and Christology can thus provide a framework for understanding and interpreting the insights of scientific anthropological research from disciplines such as psychology. Taken together, the theological turn and the Christocentric turn present an opportunity for creative new perspectives on humanity within the science-theology discourse. This thesis offers a constructive proposal informed by traditional Chalcedonian Christology, and asks: how can traditional Chalcedonian Christology inform constructive approaches to theology and psychology?

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 7; 12.

<sup>11</sup> Marc Cortez, “The Madness in our Method: Christology as the Necessary Starting Point for Theological Anthropology” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015), 23. See Chapter 4 for further discussion on this issue.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 24.

In this thesis, I argue that traditional Chalcedonian Christology not only reframes the current science-theology discourse on humanity, but it also enables constructive engagement between the disciplines of theology and psychology by providing a method for relating theological and psychological claims and methods. The thesis is divided into three parts – Christ as Axiom, Christ as Method, and Christ as End – each of which illustrates how Chalcedonian Christology can inform an understanding of humanity that brings together both psychological and theological perspectives. Drawing largely from scholars who are influenced by the Eastern Christian tradition and patristic insights,<sup>13</sup> I aim to open new paths of inquiry into topics of scientific and theological interest hitherto unexplored.

### **Reviewing the Science-Theology Landscape**

There is a robust discussion in the science-theology discourse about how scientific and theological perspectives contribute to our overall understanding of humanity, and how such perspectives relate to one another. Sciences such as psychology, neuroscience, and evolutionary biology have presented scholars with an opportunity to analyze humanity along different lines than those of previous eras. A general trend in the discourse historically has been to start with pictures of humanity informed by these scientific disciplines, and then to respond with theological and philosophical interpretations (against which Ritchie highlights the “theological turn”). Key subjects of inquiry in the discourse include the mind-body relationship, personhood, and what it means for humans to have been created in the image of God. However, within this robust discussion, the centrality of Jesus Christ to understanding humanity has historically been neglected, as Cortez notes: “Despite the widespread consensus on the determinative significance of the incarnation for understanding the human person and the tremendous impact of recent scientific and philosophical investigations into the nature of the brain and the mind, it is striking that contemporary theologians have made relatively little effort to understand the latter development in light of the former.”<sup>14</sup> He does also note that theologians have attempted to reexamine Christology in light of scientific anthropological developments, but he critiques this

---

<sup>13</sup> I discuss my rationale for emphasizing patristic and Eastern theological scholarship later in this Introduction.

<sup>14</sup> Cortez, *Embodied Souls, Ensouled Bodies*, 5. Chapter 1 of this thesis will examine representative scholarship concerning anthropological issues, including the mind-body relationship, and show how much of it does not primarily consider Christology.

as failing to recognize that Christology has relevance for understanding the anthropological data. Such an approach is essentially moving in the opposite conceptual direction to Cortez's Christocentric turn, as it starts from humanity to reframe Christology.<sup>15</sup>

One could attribute this neglect to a relative scarcity of Christology within the science-theology discourse at-large: in the first sentence to the introduction to the edited volume *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, the editors write pithily that “In conversations about science and faith, Jesus Christ rarely comes up.”<sup>16</sup> There are many possible reasons for this perception. Christopher C. Knight notes the massive influence of natural theology on the Western intellectual tradition, in which theological claims are made without reference to sources of revelation. Many of the debates that shape the current science-theology discourse arose out of the conflict between natural theology and scientific developments such as evolution<sup>17</sup> – Jesus Christ, as arguably the premier example of revelation in the Christian tradition, thus does not fit into that conflict. Wilson Poon argues that the science-religion discourse, in order to defend religious belief generally against atheism, discusses a “lowest common denominator (LCD) god’ who is supposedly shared by multiple religions.”<sup>18</sup> Poon argues that such an approach represents a “loss of nerve” by Christians, as an LCD god has little to do with the specific theological claims of Christianity, to which Jesus Christ is central.<sup>19</sup> Similar motivations are offered by the highly influential and controversial volume *The Myth of God Incarnate* – the desire for interreligious dialogue, and a more intellectually respectable theology that is compatible with science, are stated aims of the volume’s assertion that professions of Christ’s divinity are simply mythological ways of speaking about the purely human Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>20</sup> All of these factors limit or marginalize the ability of Christology, especially in its traditional formulations, to inform science-theology discussions.

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, “Introduction: Christ and the Created Order” in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, ed. Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018), 15.

<sup>17</sup> Christopher C. Knight, *The God of Nature: Incarnation and Contemporary Science* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 2-3.

<sup>18</sup> Wilson C.K. Poon, “Science as the Foolishness of God: Twenty-Eight Theses and Scholia on ‘Science and Religion’” in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, ed. Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018), 255.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 255.

<sup>20</sup> John Hick (ed.), *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 10.

However, Christology is not wholly absent from the science-theology discourse, as several scholars in recent decades have engaged contemporary scientific understandings of reality with Christology. For instance, F. LeRon Shults, in his book *Christology and Science*, argues for reforming Christology through insights from modern science, as he believes that traditional doctrinal formulations and anthropological ideas “no longer make sense in light of contemporary science.”<sup>21</sup> Shults draws inspiration from several thinkers such as Arthur Peacocke and Denis Edwards who have also approached Christology from biological and evolutionary lenses.<sup>22</sup> Such a line of thinking is valuable, but it is the opposite conceptual direction from a Christocentric turn, as it subjects Christology to the contemporary understanding of science, rather than using Christology as traditionally formulated as a hermeneutic to interpret scientific data.<sup>23</sup>

Moving in the other conceptual direction – from traditional Christology to understandings of science – one finds more scholarship that accords with the aims of this thesis. For example, the aforementioned *Christ and the Created Order* brings together perspectives from science, biblical scholarship, theology, and philosophy to explore the nature of the God-world relationship.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, one of the more popular Christological understandings of the God-world relationship is Niels Henrik Gregersen’s idea of “deep incarnation,” in which, through Christ’s Incarnation, God joins not just with human flesh, but with the whole physical realm of creation.<sup>25</sup> In this sense, God shares the conditions of materiality, thus revealing God to be everywhere present in the cosmos.<sup>26</sup> Such a notion enables Gregersen to affirm God’s ubiquity in an interconnected, material world, and has thus prompted much inspiration for both God-world relationship discussions and eco-theological thought.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> F. LeRon Shults, *Christology and Science* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008), 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-45.

<sup>23</sup> A slightly different example of this scholarly approach is the edited volume *Jesus and Psychology*, ed. Fraser Watts (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2007), in which the essays largely examine Jesus as portrayed in the Gospels viewed through various psychological lenses – this thesis will move the other conceptual direction in asking what ramifications Christology has for understanding theology and psychology.

<sup>24</sup> This volume will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

<sup>25</sup> Niels Henrik Gregersen, “Cur deus caro: Jesus and the Cosmos Story,” *Theology and Science* 11, no.4 (2013): 375.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 376.

<sup>27</sup> An edited volume on deep incarnation will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3: *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).

In a similar vein, the particular problems for theology raised by evolutionary science – such as human origins and the problem of animal suffering – have prompted a number of scholars in the science-theology discourse to interpret biological evolution in light of Christ. A notable example of this vein is Celia Deane-Drummond, who in her book *Christ and Evolution: Wonder and Wisdom* argues for a “theodramatic approach”<sup>28</sup> to evolutionary history, in which “the evolution of life becomes an integral aspect of the drama between God and God’s creatures.”<sup>29</sup> In such an approach, systematization and description give way to a participatory wisdom and wonder, which allows Deane-Drummond to reckon with both evolutionary science and the crucial significance of Christ and his work to the created order, without needing to limit or diminish either.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, thinkers such as John Haught, Christopher Southgate, and Ted Peters have attempted to address the problem of suffering in evolution by articulating a God-world relationship defined by Christ’s kenotic suffering on the cross – Southgate, for example, understands the cross as revealing Christ’s assumption of responsibility for the pain suffered in creation.<sup>31</sup>

The creative usage of Christology to address issues of the God-world relationship reveals the constructive potential of Christology in other areas of the science-theology discourse – however, the above scholarship does not delve as deeply into matters of anthropology, or engage anthropological sciences such as psychology constructively.<sup>32</sup> Given the discourse’s increasing recognition of the potential for Christological engagement with science, and the emphasis on the essentiality of Christology to anthropology by theologians, there is a clear path to employing these creative insights to the above anthropological discussions in the science-theology discourse – including the mind-body relationship, personhood, and the *imago Dei*. I will review these particular issues in Chapter 1, along with the potential for Christological insights to bring new

---

<sup>28</sup> Celia Deane-Drummond, *Christ and Evolution: Wonder and Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 51.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-9.

<sup>31</sup> Southgate’s monograph is a clear example of this - Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008) – though each of these thinkers’ differing ideas will be briefly addressed in Chapter 6.

<sup>32</sup> Deane-Drummond comes the closest in *Christ and Evolution* with a scathing critique of both evolutionary psychology (in Chapter 2) and transhumanism (in Chapter 8), and in an affirmation of Christ’s determinative role for anthropology (*Christ and Evolution*, 269) – this leads to a few brief constructive proposals for anthropology at the end of the book.

perspectives. However, my larger aim in this thesis is to go beyond the current anthropological conversations in the science-theology discourse and to explore how Christology can productively engage with psychology as a scientific discipline which studies humanity. Such an aim not only follows the constructive potential presented by the above scholars of the God-world relationship, but it also extends this potential to further issues that could be helpfully addressed by the science-theology discourse.

In this way, I also follow Cortez’s understanding of a “comprehensively Christological anthropology,” in which Christology warrants ultimate claims about true humanity such that the scope of those claims applies to all anthropological data.<sup>33</sup> A comprehensively Christological anthropology thus affirms Christology’s ability to engage with any discipline that seeks to investigate humanity. Cortez is clear that a comprehensively Christological anthropology is not an *exclusively* Christological anthropology, in that Christological tenets are professed as the only resource for approaching humanity, but rather he argues that a *complete* picture of humanity requires several disciplinary inputs, which cohere in the integrative vision of Christology.<sup>34</sup> As such, my thesis will engage traditional Chalcedonian Christology with the claims, theories, and methods of two psychological subdisciplines – childhood developmental psychology, and empirical psychotherapy – to show how the anthropological data acquired by these psychological disciplines provides insights into humanity that can be understood within a Christological framework.

### **The Choice of Traditional Chalcedonian Christology**

In this thesis, I understand traditional Chalcedonian Christology as the doctrines and theology about Jesus Christ promulgated by the Christian church primarily in the first millennium,

---

<sup>33</sup> Marc Cortez, *Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective: Ancient and Contemporary Approaches to Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2016), 225.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 222; 228. Cortez also pursues such a constructive project in his work *Resourcing Theological Anthropology* (Marc Cortez, *Resourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017)). However, Cortez draws his Christological ideas primarily from Scriptural exegesis and the theology of Karl Barth, along with contemporary theologians, and uses these ideas to examine issues such as gender, race, and attitudes towards death. This thesis thus takes a different approach from Cortez’s book in that it emphasizes patristic Christological formulations and engages with scientific accounts of humanity as part of the science-theology discourse.

especially in the professions of the Seven Ecumenical Councils.<sup>35</sup> This includes the assertions that Jesus Christ is a single person who is fully divine and fully human, the eternal Word of God who assumed human nature in its entirety, and lacks no characteristic proper to either his divinity or humanity by way of his hypostatic union. The Nicene Creed, the Chalcedonian Definition, and the further Christological reflection in the post-Chalcedonian patristic period are crucial in demonstrating how Christ reveals what it means to be human, how humans relate to God, and how we can know and understand this relationship. As David Bentley Hart argues, the debates over Christology in the formative centuries of traditional Christian theology were inextricably bound up with the formation of Christian anthropology.<sup>36</sup> These debates hinged on the claim that Jesus Christ is fully human – which is a claim that could be argued to not bear any immediate relevance to universal claims about humanity. For example, Cortez notes that some might argue: “it is not possible for a single individual, limited by the particular circumstances of his lived existence, to reveal the full reality of something as complex as the human person.”<sup>37</sup> However, the claim of Christ’s full humanity was given universal relevance to humanity by the soteriological logic of the patristic theologians. To be saved, Hart notes, was to be deified by being joined in a living union with God – and this was professed to be possible through Christ, who as God took on human nature. Hart writes: “In Christ, the Nicene party believed, the human and divine had been joined together in a perfect and indissoluble unity, by participation in which human beings might be admitted to a share in his divinity.”<sup>38</sup> This means that Christ’s full humanity is the key to the salvation of humanity, and thus the patristic theologians who would come to be accepted as professing orthodox Christianity argued vehemently for a full identification of Christ’s humanity with our humanity. Hart continues:

Pursuing this logic to its most radical consequences, the theologians who participated in the Christological debates were led into an ever-deepening consideration of how it was that Christ was human; and, in the process, they necessarily found themselves drawn into an ever-deepening consideration of what

---

<sup>35</sup> Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople (553), Constantinople (680-1), and Nicaea (787).

<sup>36</sup> David Bentley Hart, *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 200.

<sup>37</sup> Cortez, *Christological Anthropology*, 18.

<sup>38</sup> Hart, *Atheist Delusions*, 206.

it is for any of us to be human, and into an ever more precise investigation of all those hidden realms within where God (they believed) had united us to himself.<sup>39</sup>

In other words, the Christian tradition of anthropological reflection is and has been thoroughly informed by Christology – a comprehensively Christological anthropology is not merely a distinctive feature of certain thinkers, but it is also the normative anthropology for traditional theology. It is thus traditional Chalcedonian Christology that grounds the premises of a Christocentric turn by affirming Christ’s universal significance to humanity. Especially as it developed in the patristic period, Christology is necessarily tied to issues of anthropology, and it thus makes sense to use traditional Christology to approach contemporary theological conversations surrounding humanity.

This view is not held by all scholars – for example, F. LeRon Shults argues against the use of Greek patristic concepts in articulating Christology, as he believes contemporary anthropological concepts are preferable for discussing the divinity and humanity of Christ.<sup>40</sup> As mentioned earlier, Shults believes that traditional Christological doctrines no longer make sense in light of scientific developments, and he particularly criticizes the Chalcedonian Definition for emphasizing “sameness” and “substance” in its Christological formulations,<sup>41</sup> whereas he would prefer a more dynamic and relational emphasis in Christology. Shults’s criticisms lose force, however, when juxtaposed with scholarship that notes how traditional Christological terms *were* inherently dynamic and relational. For example, Shults writes that “the idea that we are called to participate in the incarnation will seem blasphemous if we hold onto the categories of substance metaphysics.”<sup>42</sup> And yet, as we see in Hart above, it is the union of divine and human essences in Christ that *enables* the human participation in Christ which is salvation – far from being blasphemous, the notion of participation is key to traditional Christian metaphysics’ very logic.

I explore further in Chapter 2 how patristic terminology actually has a dynamic and relational content; however, presently it will suffice to note that Shults’s criticism is not limited to him

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 209.

<sup>40</sup> Shults, *Christology and Science*, 34.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 25-6.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 61.

alone, and extends further into the science-theology discourse with even more simplistic caricatures of “classical theism,” or the accusation of Christian theology being corrupted by Greek philosophy.<sup>43</sup> If one rationale for choosing traditional Chalcedonian Christology for this thesis is due to its essentiality to theological anthropological thought, another rationale is to rebut such accusations against patristic theology and instead to demonstrate its constructive potential for engaging with contemporary science. As such, while not a direct study in Patristics, this project views contemporary scholars who draw on patristic Christological thought – and the implications thereof for engagement with key themes in the science-theology discourse – as contributing fresh and interesting arguments that are often more consonant with contemporary scientific thought than the suggestions of other scholars who elide or ignore patristic ideas. The Chalcedonian Definition, in particular, will receive extended attention throughout this thesis for its insights into human nature, personhood, the God-world relationship, and even the epistemological limits of disciplines of inquiry.

Scholars who draw on the Eastern Christian tradition receive particular emphasis in this thesis. This tradition has received comparably less consideration in the science-theology discourse than the Western tradition – and yet, as Christopher Knight argues, Eastern Orthodox theology possesses rich and novel resources for addressing questions of the God-world relationship, human nature, and personhood.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, my personal Eastern Orthodox faith lends me more familiarity and competence with the concepts such scholars employ. Orthodox scholars, as well as non-Orthodox scholars who draw their theology from the Eastern tradition, tend to keep conciliar Christology and patristic scholarship at the center of their theological reflection, likely because Eastern Orthodoxy has heavily emphasized the patristic era within its current teachings and liturgical life. This thesis thus aims to justify Knight’s suggestion that Eastern patristic perspectives can provide answers to many of the questions that scholars in the science-theology discourse have raised.<sup>45</sup> All of these rationales inform my decision to focus on traditional Chalcedonian Christology, with a particular emphasis on Eastern theology, for engaging with psychology.

---

<sup>43</sup> Several scholars make this caricature in another volume we will discuss further in Chapter 3: *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001).

<sup>44</sup> Knight, *The God of Nature*, xi-xii.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, xii.

## The Aims and Structure of this Thesis

This project is a work of constructive theology that engages psychological research with theological claims. Traditional Christology lies at the core of the project, yet I also aim to engage psychological research without abrogating its empirical claims, theories, and methods. As I will demonstrate in this thesis, particularly in Chapter 4, the claims of psychology do not necessitate conflict with the claims of traditional theology, but rather the two types of claims find a coherency within a Chalcedonian Christological perspective. As such, I present and defend scientific ideas from the discipline of psychology in my final two chapters, without holding traditional theological commitments in suspense. This project's theological foundations may make it more appealing to theologians and church members who desire to understand how scientific research and conceptions of humanity can be reconciled with traditional theological thought. That being said, given the value commitments implicit and explicit in psychological research, it is also my hope that this project could be valuable to practicing psychologists by providing a framework in which those value commitments could be interrogated and nuanced, assuming such psychologists accept the framework's Christological foundations.

My thesis thus comprises three parts: "Christ as Axiom," "Christ as Method," and "Christ as End." In Part 1: "Christ as Axiom," I identify the ways in which making traditional Christology a starting point in discourse on humanity – rather than an optional reference point – reframes the discourse in such a way as to call into question many common assumptions about human constitution and identity. Chapter 1 begins with a review of three current conversations within the science-theology discourse on what it means to be human – the *imago Dei*, personhood, and the mind-body relationship – and argues that approaching these conversations from a Christological perspective changes and focuses them into different and more productive discussions. Chapter 2 then introduces and spotlights the Chalcedonian distinction between personhood and human nature as a Christological axiom – a distinction scholars tend to ignore – and argues that this distinction actually pushes us to understand humanity theologically in a more nuanced and dynamic way, that is also more compatible with contemporary scientific understandings of humanity as constantly-changing and interrelated beings. In that way, Chapter 2 presents an account of human constitution as personhood expressed by natural energies, which

is informed by traditional Chalcedonian Christology and, I will argue, provides a preferable approach to both the mind-body relationship and the phenomenon of personhood.

In Part 2: “Christ as Method,” I explore how Chalcedonian Christology can not only reframe current conversations in the science-theology discourse, but can also constitute a method for more generally relating psychological insights on humanity to theological anthropological claims. Chapter 3 begins this process by reviewing a selection of literature in the science-theology discourse that employs Christology to relate God and the world, and thus it argues that several key principles facilitate understanding of the God-world – and thus the God-human – relationship as revealed in Christ, most notably the principle of asymmetry between the infinite and the finite. Chapter 4 then uses those Christologically-informed principles to build a method that relates the disciplines of theology and psychology, as disciplines which study God and humanity, by analyzing and assessing similar methods from other interdisciplinary scholars. Ultimately, this method views the relationship between theology and psychology as one of asymmetrical participation, as revealed through the Chalcedonian Definition: as the humanity of Christ participates in his divinity, I will elaborate on how psychological claims similarly participate in theological claims.

In Part 3: “Christ as End,” I employ the above Chalcedonian Christological method to constructively approach questions in which areas of psychological research – childhood development and psychological well-being – are related to traditional theology, with a particular eye toward the *telos* of humanity as revealed in Christ. Developmental psychology and psychotherapy, while scientific enterprises and thus concerned with objective empirical claims and methods, do both have implicit and explicit value commitments towards human behavior and well-being, and thus they provide intriguing conversation partners with the explicit value commitments that traditional theology makes towards human action and purpose in Christ. Chapter 5 brings theories of childhood developmental psychology – including attachment theory and various theories of cognitive development – into conversation with the Christological notion of filiation, or relating to God the Father as a child, as employed by Rowan Williams. Chapter 6 will bring the aims of two contemporary empirical forms of psychotherapy – cognitive therapy and positive psychology – into conversation with the Christological notion of doxological

contrition, as defined by Khaled Anatolios as the soteriological principle of Christ crucified. I suggest that the insights derived from the application of my Christological method in these two chapters have relevance both to the science-theology discourse and to other related areas, including pastoral theology, psychological practice, and theological anthropology.

In summary, in this thesis I argue that Chalcedonian Christology has constructive potential for the science-theology discourse on humanity, and I demonstrate this potential by developing an interdisciplinary method that not only provides new avenues for conceptually relating theology and psychology, but also informs a constructive vision of humanity and the God-human relationship.

## **PART 1: CHRIST AS AXIOM**

# Chapter 1: A Christological Approach to Three Science-Theology Conversations about Humanity

## Introduction

In this first chapter, I will review three of the most prominent conversations in the science-theology discourse surrounding the question of what it means to be human: the *imago Dei*, personhood, and the mind/soul-body relationship. After discussing some of the most salient issues in each of these conversations, I will argue that making Christ the starting point for understanding humanity changes the contours of each conversation in a way that enables fresh engagement with scientific claims and more thorough engagement with theological claims. In this way, the purpose of this chapter is to review the science-theology literature surrounding key conversations about humanity in order to assess the benefits of taking a Christological approach, thus setting the stage for employing Chalcedonian Christology to contribute to and go beyond these conversations in the rest of this thesis.

## Humanity and the Image of God

The concept of the *imago Dei* – that humans are created in the image of God – is most often discussed in reference to the opening chapter of Genesis:

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.<sup>46</sup>

This text, and the concept of the image of God more broadly, have generally been understood to signify that God made all humans in a certain way that marks them as special from the rest of creation. What makes humans special – both to God and compared to the rest of creation – is disputed and frequently discussed among scholars in the science-theology discourse. Especially

---

<sup>46</sup> Genesis 1:26-7, NRSV.

with regards to distinguishing humans from the rest of creation, science-theology scholarship has focused on recent evolutionary and biological evidence as a way of interrogating human uniqueness. Biblical criticism and theological traditions also inform understandings of the *imago Dei*. Noreen Herzfeld identifies three common interpretational categories of the *imago Dei* – substantive, functional, and relational – and notes that each category arises out of different methodological and evidential considerations.<sup>47</sup>

In this section, I will examine each of these categories and the methodologies behind them, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of each interpretation with particular reference to three traditional aspects of the *imago Dei*: the exclusivity of the *imago Dei* to humans; the universality of the *imago Dei* among humans; and a specific, meaningful content of the *imago Dei*. Following this analysis, I will present two Christological interpretations of the *imago Dei* to argue that a Christological interpretation ensures all three of these aspects of the *imago Dei*, boasts both scriptural and theological support, and manages to encompass all three interpretations – substantive, functional, and relational – with a more focused content.

### *Substantive Interpretations*

Substantive interpretations of the *imago Dei* hold that the image of God can be identified with some facet of our human nature, or an intrinsic property that humans evidentially and uniquely possess.<sup>48</sup> A common example of this interpretation would be identifying human reason with the *imago Dei* – humans possess reason, while animals and the rest of creation do not, and thus humans can comprehend God in a special way. James Henry Collin argues just this when he claims that being in the image of God essentially involves being rational. Collin’s support for this claim rests both on scientific evidence of human uniqueness, and on the Christian theological tradition. Beginning with the latter, Collin quotes from Athanasius of Alexandria and John of Damascus to argue that patristic figures often identified the image of God with humanity’s ability to reason – Athanasius even contrasts humanity with the “irrational animals”

---

<sup>47</sup> Noreen Herzfeld, “In Whose Image? Artificial Intelligence and the *Imago Dei*” in *The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity*, ed. J.B. Stump and Alan G. Padgett (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 503.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 501.

– thus establishing a traditional theological foundation for such an association.<sup>49</sup> Collin then argues that evidence for a cognitive distinction between humans and other animals is warranted: while other animals can communicate, they cannot use symbolic languages in the way that enables human reason, which is a qualitative difference between them and humans. Humans can thus construct and grasp novel concepts, which enable them to experience and shape the world like no other creature. Hence, Collin asserts that humans are unique in being rational and discursive creatures.<sup>50</sup>

While Collin’s view is typical of those who hold substantive interpretations of the *imago Dei*, it is a view that has many detractors, and substantive interpretations are widely attacked on two kinds of grounds. The first is that of scientific evidence for human uniqueness. Taking an evolutionary perspective, Joshua M. Moritz argues that the slow and gradual process of evolution engenders a continuity between living creatures, whereas substantive views of humanity generally claim a discontinuous gap between humans and other animals. For Moritz, scientific evidence has not shown that humans possess qualities that are non-trivially distinct from other animals, be it cognition, language, technology, or anything else.<sup>51</sup> And if, according to Moritz’s perspective, there is no non-trivial way to identify any distinct human nature evolutionarily, then those who claim that humans are uniquely created in the image of God cannot make any appeals to biological or intrinsic characteristics of human nature.<sup>52</sup> To hold to a view that humans alone possess the *imago Dei* – which Moritz argues is theologically and exegetically essential – one must look elsewhere than substantive interpretations of the *imago Dei*.

Whether to support Collin or Moritz in this debate will depend to a large extent on the understanding of reason and language as being qualitative differences between humans and animals. For Collin, no other animals possess language in the way humans do, and the theological tradition of humanity’s rationality imaging God’s rationality (and our logical nature

---

<sup>49</sup> James Henry Collin, “Human Uniqueness and the Normative Conception of the Rational” in *Issues in Science and Theology: Are We Special? Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology*, ed. Michael Fuller, Dirk Evers, Anne Runehov, and Knut-Willy Sæther (Cham: Springer, 2017), 235-6.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 236.

<sup>51</sup> Joshua M. Moritz, “Evolution, the End of Human Uniqueness, and the Election of the *Imago Dei*,” *Theology and Science* 9,3 (2011): 312-5.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 315-6.

imaging the divine Logos) confirms such an essential distinction.<sup>53</sup> Moritz does not argue that animals do possess language in a qualitatively similar way to humans – rather, he argues that empirical science has not yet clearly shown that animals do differ in qualitative ways. In doing so, he thrusts the burden of proof back on those who hold to human natural uniqueness, arguing that they fall prey to an “*anthropocentrism of the gaps*,” and an “unwarranted faith in human uniqueness,” in lieu of scientific proof one way or the other.<sup>54</sup> He further reinforces his critiques by arguing that evolutionary processes do not create sharp discontinuities, thus lending support to his belief that such qualitative differences will not be found.<sup>55</sup> Such debates will likely continue as long as empirical science can be argued to have not proved or disproved human uniqueness, one way or the other.

The second kind of ground on which substantive interpretations of the *imago Dei* are attacked is exegetical – starting from the text of Genesis itself. Given the still unresolved ambiguities in the scientific evidence debate, this second set of objections is arguably more detrimental to substantive interpretations, especially those who hold that the substance of the *imago Dei* is reason or language. As Herzfeld notes, reason is not mentioned in Genesis 1, nor are any other similar intrinsic qualities of humanity like language or creative thought.<sup>56</sup> As such, scholars using exegetical methods have turned towards functional interpretations of the *imago Dei*.

### *Functional Interpretations*

Functional interpretations of the *imago Dei* argue that the image of God is better understood as a vocation than as an intrinsic human quality.<sup>57</sup> This interpretation stems from the text that directly follows the *imago Dei* phrase in Genesis 1, in which humans are instructed to have dominion over all the other living creatures, and to multiply.<sup>58</sup> An advantage to this type of interpretation, Herzfeld notes, is that it considers the *imago Dei* in its textual context: humans are created in the image of God, and then the text directly specifies what God intends for humans to do.<sup>59</sup> Another

---

<sup>53</sup> Collin, “Human Uniqueness,” 236.

<sup>54</sup> Moritz, “Election of the Imago Dei,” 312.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 314.

<sup>56</sup> Herzfeld, “In Whose Image?,” 502.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 502.

<sup>58</sup> Genesis 1:26-8.

<sup>59</sup> Herzfeld, “In Whose Image?,” 502.

advantage of functional interpretations, illustrated by Moritz, is that it situates the concept of the *imago Dei* in the ancient Near Eastern cultural environment in which Genesis is also situated. In ancient Near Eastern societies, including Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt, the king was often referred to as being in the image of God, and such an appellation is understood to have meant that the king was the gods' viceroy on earth.<sup>60</sup> Such an understanding gives an important meaning to the *imago Dei* as used in the Genesis text, as instead of a single king who acts as God's regent on earth, all of humanity is given the title. Given that scholars often regard many elements of Genesis 1 as polemics against other Near Eastern cultures,<sup>61</sup> an understanding of the *imago Dei* that hearkens to other Near Eastern uses, yet differentiates itself in a striking way, is a very plausible reading of the text.

It is this kind of functional interpretation of the *imago Dei* that Moritz proffers as an alternative to interpretations based on specific qualities unique to humanity. For Moritz, the *imago Dei* is best understood as the election of humanity – that God has chosen humans freely, of his own volition, to serve his purposes on the earth.<sup>62</sup> The concept has resonance both with the Near Eastern kingship notion just discussed (in which the king – or humanity – is chosen by God for his purposes), and with the Hebrew Bible motif of the election of Israel, which Moritz calls a “democratization” of the image of God. In the same way that the whole nation of Israel was set apart to be a light to the nations, Moritz envisions humanity as being set apart to be a light to the rest of the animals. Humans are thus different from the animals not by virtue of special empirical characteristics, but by virtue of being specially chosen by God to serve his purposes among the rest of creation.<sup>63</sup>

Moritz's functional interpretation is well supported by biblical and Near Eastern evidence, but a question naturally arises out of such an interpretation: what, then, are God's purposes for humans among the animals? Moritz argues for a view of humanity as the high priests of creation, set apart to serve and rule in a priestly way: humans, as priests, intercede on behalf of the rest of

---

<sup>60</sup> Moritz, “Election of the Imago Dei,” 318.

<sup>61</sup> See Claus Westermann, *Creation* (London: SPCK, 1974, Translated by John J. Scullion), 44, in which he argues that the creation of the sun and moon on the fourth day were an explicit attempt to de-divinize the heavenly bodies, and show the subservience of creation to Creator.

<sup>62</sup> Moritz, “Election of the Imago Dei,” 321.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 329-330.

creation before God.<sup>64</sup> This also nuances Moritz’s view of human dominion, as used in Genesis 1: for Moritz, dominion must carry with it the ancient Hebrew understanding of concern for justice and advocacy for the poor and helpless.<sup>65</sup> However, it is not clear what exactly such intercession should entail. Herzfeld argues that this kind of interpretation can lend support for the environmental movement, as humanity’s dominion entails responsibility.<sup>66</sup> However, as Lynn White famously noted, the concept of dominion has historically been just as easily used to justify dominion in a more violent sense, as humans acting as conquerors and subjugators of creation.<sup>67</sup> And regardless of whether one understands dominion as responsibility or subjugation – and it is still disputed as to how Genesis 1:26 should be understood – it is unclear how such functional interpretations of the *imago Dei* are theologically useful. What does it mean for humanity to be priests to the animals? Extending the idea of Israel’s election from the nations to humanity’s election from the animals is not without its own ambiguities and concerns.

The support for functional interpretations is primarily exegetical: rather than beginning with historical theological reflection on the *imago Dei*, functional interpreters begin with the scriptural text and draw out the dominion language surrounding the creation of humans in God’s image. However, as Herzfeld points out, the creation of humanity in Genesis 1 is also accompanied by the statement “male and female he created them.”<sup>68</sup> Herzfeld argues that this points towards a third understanding of the *imago Dei*: relational interpretations.

### *Relational Interpretations*

Relational interpretations of the *imago Dei* argue that the concept refers primarily to humans existing in relationships. Karl Barth, for example, argues that God gives us the possibility of existing in an “I-Thou relationship” – whether human-human, or human-God, the very nature of humanity is rooted in relationship with an other.<sup>69</sup> This relationship is the image of God because, as Barth notes, God himself is a relationship of persons, capable of intrinsically being an “I-Thou.” Hence, as God is relationship (a Trinity of persons), the image of God is our relating to

---

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 325-6.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 327.

<sup>66</sup> Herzfeld, “In Whose Image?,” 502.

<sup>67</sup> Lynn White, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science* 155,3767 (1967): 1205.

<sup>68</sup> Genesis 1:27, NRSV.

<sup>69</sup> Herzfeld, “In Whose Image?,” 502.

both God and other persons. Barth provides further support for his belief by arguing that the “Let us” and “in our image” in Genesis 1:26 refer to the Trinity, and are thus explicit markers of the notion of the *imago Dei* as relationship. Likewise, the phrase “male and female he created them” implies the differentiation of humanity necessary for humans to enter into “I-Thou” relationships with each other.<sup>70</sup>

This relational approach has particular attractions: as Claus Westermann argues, if the image of God solely signifies the fact that humans exist in relationship to God and each other, as themselves, then it truly is a universal marker. No one can argue that someone is not in the image of God based on any characteristic, behavior, or belief state, for humanity’s very dignity is secured in being a creation of God.<sup>71</sup> Such a view also gets around the troubles with needing to scientifically justify human uniqueness: the relational interpretation requires no empirical verification. As such, Herzfeld notes that the relational interpretation of the *imago Dei* has “become the dominant approach among systematic theologians in the mid- to late twentieth century.”<sup>72</sup> Indeed, John Behr argues that the Trinitarian model of the *imago Dei* has become almost a consensus: as the Trinity consists of multiple persons in relationship and communion, so humanity consists of multiple persons in relationship and communion.<sup>73</sup> It should be noted that Behr sees this Trinitarian, relational model of the *imago Dei* as theologically problematic, even incorrect, but I will discuss Behr’s conception of the *imago Dei* in the next section – the important point presently is that this Trinitarian, relational interpretation of the *imago Dei* has many proponents.

That does not mean it is immune from critique: Barth has been criticized for beginning his rationale with discussions of the Trinity, and then reading his theological assumptions into the Genesis text, which predates Christianity in its origins.<sup>74</sup> Such a criticism is holding to a strictly exegetical method, and an historical-literal one at that, insofar as a Christian understanding of God cannot be claimed to feasibly be reflected in the text. Barth’s method is, of course, primarily

---

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 502-3.

<sup>71</sup> Westermann, *Creation*, 58-60.

<sup>72</sup> Herzfeld, “In Whose Image?,” 503.

<sup>73</sup> John Behr, *The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2006), 176.

<sup>74</sup> Herzfeld, “In Whose Image?,” 503.

theological: he begins with his understanding of who God is, and then proceeds to reflect on what it would mean to be in the image of God. His biblical exegesis then gives support and clarity to this theological notion, which is not necessarily an unreasonable approach to reading scriptural texts from a theologically dogmatic position. However, while David Fergusson also critiques Barth on what he calls his “strained” reading of Genesis, Fergusson more strongly critiques Barth’s theological method of making the Trinity his starting point for *imago Dei* discussions. For Fergusson, the distinction between persons of the Trinity made in the patristic era was never meant to be easily analogous to human persons – such a relational interpretation then is “beset with an abstractionism that makes it of limited anthropological significance.”<sup>75</sup> For Fergusson, one cannot simply and univocally apply human concepts to Trinitarian concepts.<sup>76</sup>

These three major interpretations of the *imago Dei* – substantive, functional, and relational – all have merits and concerns. Generally, how each interpretation is prioritized will likely be related to the methodology with which one approaches the concept of the *imago Dei*. Between historical theological traditions, scientific evidence, biblical exegesis, philosophy, and modern systematic theology, a plethora of choices exist by which to explore the concept of the *imago Dei*. However, one interpretation that has been neglected in the discussions above is that of Christ being the image of God. As Marc Cortez argues, Jesus *is* the image of God – it is stated as such in Colossians: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation”<sup>77</sup> – and thus Jesus must be central to any Christian understanding of the *imago Dei*. Such an approach does not discount the above methods, but unites them through a specific Christian theological lens, one that is traditionally supported and resolves many of the above concerns with substantive, functional, and relational interpretations. I will examine two scholars – Oliver Crisp and John Behr – each of whom highlights the importance of seeing Christ as the image of God, and I will show how each scholar reconciles such a claim with the biblical, scientific, and theological evidence surrounding the *imago Dei* debate.

---

<sup>75</sup> David Fergusson, “Humans Created According to the *Imago Dei*: An Alternative Proposal,” *Zygon* 48,2 (2013): 443-4.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, 444.

<sup>77</sup> Colossians 1:15, NRSV.

### *Christological Interpretations*

Oliver Crisp argues, based largely on the above arguments, that Jesus Christ is alone the image of God, and that other humans possess the *imago Dei* in that they are made in the likeness of Christ.<sup>78</sup> For Crisp, taking a Christological perspective, in addition to being heavily scripturally supported, also resolves many of the issues inherent in substantive, relational, and functional interpretations of the *imago Dei*. Crisp agrees that substantive views risk excluding certain people from the *imago Dei* who do not bear out those faculties – however, he also argues that functional and relational interpretations ultimately collapse into substantive views. If one wants to claim that the ability for humans to hold a certain function or to be a part of a certain relationship is the *imago Dei*, then that still implies that humans possess particular characteristics that enable them to exercise that function or relationship.<sup>79</sup> In that case, functional and relational understandings of the *imago Dei* either supplement or reduce to substantive interpretations, or there is no way to account for human uniqueness. Crisp proposes taking an entirely different approach to the debate by starting with Jesus Christ as the image of God to which we are being conformed – such active and ongoing language gives the *imago Dei* an anticipatory character in such a way as to ensure Christological grounding without losing its human universality. Christ is the archetypal human being in more ways than one: Crisp argues that he bears a full, complete, and perfect human nature, but he also demonstrates that human nature is meant to image divine nature, and thus be united to the divine nature. Christ does this within his own personhood, but all humans are given a human nature that can be united to the divine nature, in deification.<sup>80</sup> Crisp thus claims about a Christological interpretation:

It is an improvement on various iterations of the substantive and relational doctrines of the image of God because it is able to include within the scope of the divine image the whole human being, not just certain powers or capacities that supposedly distinguish humans from all other creatures. What is more, it provides a reason for thinking that there is an important relational dimension to the image

---

<sup>78</sup> Oliver Crisp, “A Christological Model of the *Imago Dei*,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015), 217.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 222.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 224-5.

of God because those made in his image are conformed to the likeness of Christ. Finally, by making Christology the theological frame for discussion of the divine image, it provides a reason for thinking that human beings possess the divine image in a way that it is not present in other creatures. This is an important consideration given the amount of ink that has been spilt trying to discover some reason for thinking that the image of God is unique to human beings.<sup>81</sup>

In other words, a Christological interpretation removes the fear of exclusion from substantive interpretations, grounds the relational interpretation in a very specific relationship (that of Christ to God) and nuances the functional interpretation by making Christ the model of the role which God has given to humans. Thus, Crisp can also say that a Christological interpretation “is able to incorporate the central issues of both the substantive and relational views of the divine image, and to reconcile the apparent tensions between Old and New Testament material concerning the nature of that image. It also provides a way of thinking about humanity that is shaped by specifically Christological concerns, rather than more general theological or philosophical ones.”<sup>82</sup> This last statement is most appealing within a Christian theological commitment, but given that theological anthropology relies so heavily on Christology, it makes sense that science-theology discussions about the *imago Dei* would prioritize Christology. A Christological interpretation not only evades the problems inherent in substantive, functional, and relational interpretations of the *imago Dei*, but also gives each of them a more specific content.

John Behr takes a similar Christological perspective on the *imago Dei* – emphasizing the specificity of its application to Jesus Christ, and from that a universal application to all humanity – but with a special focus on the cross and with a more substantial attempt to reconcile the Genesis language with a Christological interpretation. To do so, Behr heavily critiques the Trinitarian relational understanding of the *imago Dei* as being our own philosophical personalist abstractions projected back onto theology. Behr argues that the Apostle Paul and the early Church Fathers were clear that Christ alone is to be seen as the image of God:<sup>83</sup> “For in him the

---

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 223.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 226.

<sup>83</sup> John Behr, “The Promise of the Image” in *Imago Dei: Human Dignity in Ecumenical Perspective*, ed. Thomas Albert Howard (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 27.

whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.”<sup>84</sup> Behr even goes further to argue that the true image is Christ crucified, and that for us to be in the image of God is to conform to this image by taking up our crosses.<sup>85</sup> For Behr, drawing on Irenaeus and Tertullian, this Christ-crucified understanding of the *imago Dei* entails the whole human body, not merely our rationality or other abstracted characteristics: “Our body is not only the handiwork of God, being fashioned into the image and likeness of God, that is, of Christ who is to come, but also the “pledge” of God that this indeed shall come to pass.”<sup>86</sup> Behr does note that later Alexandrian theologians like Athanasius connected our rational faculties (*logikoi*) with Christ as divine Logos (as we saw above with Collin) – however, he argues that Athanasius also emphasized the Word taking a body such that we can become part of his body.<sup>87</sup> As such, Behr argues:

The predominant perspective of the Christian tradition in the first millennium, with two exceptions, was to relate the creation of the human being in the image of God to Christ as the image of God, and to place this in eschatological perspective— we are created looking forward to, in anticipation of, as a type of Christ.<sup>88</sup>

Behr mentions these “two exceptions” to be illustrative, as he finds both problematic and thus evidence by comparison of the truth of Christ as the *imago Dei*.<sup>89</sup> One is Augustine, who uses psychological imagery to compare human faculties to the Trinity – and as I noted earlier, Behr does not agree with such human-Trinity extrapolations. The other is the Antiochene school represented by Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia, who Behr argues separated the Old Testament and the New Testament as two separate histories, thus requiring Genesis 1:27 to be interpreted solely within its Old Testament context. Behr notes this is what modern Old

---

<sup>84</sup> Colossians 2:9, NRSV. Behr uses the verse in different translation; NRSV here for consistency.

<sup>85</sup> Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, 176.

<sup>86</sup> Behr, “The Promise of the Image,” 28.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

<sup>89</sup> The validity of either of these critiques – of Augustine or of the Antiochene school – is not as important to this section’s argument as the reasoning Behr employs in critiquing them, as both of his critiques are essentially critiques of other scholarly approaches to the *imago Dei*: the application of human concepts to the Trinity, and making an historical-critical reading of the Genesis text primary over theological readings.

Testament scholars also do, heavily implying that he disagrees with such an exegetical method.<sup>90</sup> Rather, Behr argues that the Apostolic and orthodox method of exegesis is to read the Old Testament as a “thesaurus,” or compendium of words and images, all about Christ crucified.<sup>91</sup>

In this way, Behr claims that Genesis 1:26-7 itself refers to Christ – the making of humanity in God’s image is completed in Christ. For the text to say that Adam is made in the image of God is already pointing to Christ, for Adam is a type of Christ, as noted in Romans.<sup>92</sup> Behr argues that the Gospel of John makes this connection explicit: Pilate says “Behold, the man (*anthropos*)”<sup>93</sup> upon presenting Christ to be crucified, and Christ’s last words on the cross are “It is finished,”<sup>94</sup> or in Behr’s rendering, “fulfilled” or “completed.” For Behr then, the whole divine plan of creation and salvation together culminate in the creation of humanity in God’s image, at the crucifixion.<sup>95</sup> Behr concludes:

The work of God is complete, and the Lord of creation now rests from his work in the tomb on the blessed Sabbath. By himself undergoing the Passion as a man, Jesus Christ, as Son of God and himself God, fashions us into the image and likeness of God, the image of God that he himself is (Col 1:15). As St. Irenaeus put it, “The work of God is the fashioning of the human being.”<sup>96</sup>

Here, Behr interprets not solely the New Testament, but also the Old Testament, in light of Christ, and thus the *imago Dei* consistently and only applies to him. And again, such an exclusively Christological focus of the *imago Dei* need not also exclude other interpretations above: Behr himself acknowledges the rational and bodily character of the *imago Dei*; Christ is also the high priest-king of creation, with dominion over all the earth; and Christ does relate to the Father, and promises his relationship as the Son of God to all of us as well. Behr’s cross-focused Christological interpretation thus encompasses substantive, functional, and relational

---

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 29-30. We will return to the Antiochene school in Chapter 2, when discussing debates over human nature and personhood in the patristic era.

<sup>91</sup> Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, 55.

<sup>92</sup> Behr, “The Promise of the Image,” 27. Also Romans 5:14.

<sup>93</sup> John 19:5, Behr’s version.

<sup>94</sup> John 19:30, Behr’s version and NRSV.

<sup>95</sup> Behr, “The Promise of the Image,” 35-6.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 36.

interpretations. But it also focuses all of these interpretations into an anticipatory understanding, with Christ crucified as the true image through which all these interpretations must be understood.

A key takeaway from this discussion is that if Christ is the image of God, then any discussion we have about the nature of the *imago Dei* or its relevance to human uniqueness must begin with a discussion of our end in Christ. Part 3 of this thesis will return to this point with two Christological interpretations of the *imago Dei*: Christ as child of God and Christ crucified. Presently, we see that a Christological turn in discussions of the *imago Dei* redirects us not only to think about what properties, purposes, or understandings of humanity are important, but why they are crucial to our conforming to Christ as the *imago Dei*. Both Behr and Crisp direct our attention to the ways in which Christology can hold together and nuance other interpretations of the *imago Dei* – and thus I argue that by starting with the claim that Christ is the *imago Dei*, we are able to discern much-needed clarity in what constitutes the *imago Dei* in each of us.

### **Humanity and Personhood**

The claim that human beings are “persons” is riddled with ambiguity. Generally, scholars use personhood as way to distinguish something about a human being that gives them value, over and against non-persons. Much of the theological discussion surrounding human personhood overlaps with discussion of the *imago Dei*, especially in the latter’s relational interpretations. However, I want to examine personhood as its own subject category of theological scholarly conversation: examining it separately from the *imago Dei* highlights the ways in which the concept has its own relevance to science (especially psychology) and theology; and also, the concept of personhood is crucial for traditional (especially patristic) theology, and theological terms such as “hypostasis” will be particularly critical to the next chapter’s analysis of human constitution. As such, raising the issues in science-theology scholarship specifically surrounding personhood, and how Christology can redirect the conversation in meaningful ways, is the goal of this section.

### *Historical Understandings of Personhood*

Part of the difficulty in understanding the meaning of personhood throughout the ages is that there has arguably never been a consensus on what “person” means. Theologically, two different Greek terms are translated as “person” today in English. One is *hypostasis*, which actually means something more akin to “mode of existence,” and prior to the Christian conciliar debates had a similar meaning to *ousia* or “essence.” The other is *prosopon*, which more directly refers to “person,” but also carries the meaning of “mask” – it has a connection to the theatre, in which actors would wear masks to exemplify their character and emotional state (*persona* being the Latin term). In the early Christological debates, the subtly different meanings of these terms caused much consternation. However, whether one used *hypostasis* or *prosopon*, orthodox Christianity ultimately emphasized the unity of Christ’s person. Niels Henrik Gregersen claims that while Christianity does not have exclusive claim to forming the concept of the human person (he argues the Stoic tradition has its own contributions), Christianity was certainly influential in developing the meaning of personhood in Western history.<sup>97</sup>

Gregersen traces several meanings of person in historical Western culture, including: a mark of individuality; a moral and accountable subject; the self-identity of a being; the public roles of the individual; and the transcendence of the human.<sup>98</sup> Each of these meanings emphasizes the distinctiveness of the human person, but does not necessarily accord with the other meanings, such that we can discern a unified understanding of personhood. One commonality that Gregersen notes is that “person” is not a neutral term: to mark something as a “person” is to assign a certain value to that thing, possibly the highest value accorded to humans in contemporary societies.<sup>99</sup>

But how should science and other disciplines interpret a concept like “personhood?” Gregersen and others offer many perspectives; however, as I hope to show, such perspectives do not get us closer to defining what it means to be a “person,” so much as they complicate the ability to determine such a definition. Especially, I will argue, Christian theology has a very specific use of

---

<sup>97</sup> Niels Henrik Gregersen, “Varieties of Personhood: Mapping the Issues” in *The Human Person in Science and Theology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen, Willem B. Drees, and Ulf Görman (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 8-9.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 8-9.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

the word “person,” and how it relates to both God and humanity, that should be heeded in interdisciplinary discussions involving theology. I thus look at a sample of essays from the edited volume *The Human Person in Science and Theology*, to narrow the scope of this section to just scholarship that is examining how the two relevant disciplines of science and theology characterize human personhood. And I will show that taking a Christological perspective on personhood refocuses the discussion away from the kinds of conversations these essays are having, and necessitates a turn to other avenues of discussion.

### *Interdisciplinary Perspectives*

Bringing scientific lenses to bear on personhood is tricky, as “person” does not carry the same theological connotations when used in a scientific sense, and the theological concept of personhood does not have obvious empirical parallels – however, in his introduction to the volume, Gregersen argues that science is useful in investigating closely related concepts like “sense of self,” “consciousness,” and “neurological experience.”<sup>100</sup> Neuroscience and psychology can tell us much about the operations of the human brain and human behavior, and as such should theoretically inform us about human personhood as well. Gregersen argues for a “bio-cultural” paradigm in which personhood emerges from both evolutionary and neurological sciences, and the development of human culture. In this sense, human personhood is not purely a psychological phenomenon, but an intersection of biological roots and cultural conditioning.<sup>101</sup> Such a paradigm implies that personhood is an inherently interdisciplinary concept, or at least needs to be explored as such.

Fraser Watts, in supporting this bio-cultural approach, argues for an understanding of personhood analogous to that of emotions. As Watts notes, human emotions have both biological and social aspects, which must both be accounted for to fully explain emotionality.<sup>102</sup> An emotion such as guilt, for example, arises due to a certain moral order of society, but would entail a physiological substrate as well.<sup>103</sup> For Watts, the goal of psychology as a discipline is to

---

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 5-6.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 6-7.

<sup>102</sup> Fraser Watts, “The Multifaceted Nature of Human Personhood: Psychological and Theological Perspectives,” in *The Human Person in Science and Theology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen, Willem B. Drees, and Ulf Görman (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 41.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 42.

hold together both the biological and social aspects of the human phenomenon<sup>104</sup> – thinkers who neglect either the biological or social aspects of humanity are missing whole parts of the human phenomenon, and thus impoverish their understandings of personhood.<sup>105</sup> Watts even notes that within evolutionary science itself it is getting more difficult to separate the effects of genes on the human being from the effects of the environment – the interaction of the two is more determinative than either on their own.<sup>106</sup> Watts’s advocacy of the bio-cultural approach is more preliminary and prospective than determinative itself – his argument is to show the necessity of considering the multiple influences on humanity, but he does not narrow down one particular feature of personhood (nor does he desire to). He writes that it would be helpful if “strong links were forged between the naturalistic approach to the person of biological psychology and the more hermeneutic approach of social psychology”<sup>107</sup> – meaning that human personhood inherently requires multiple methodologies to understand.

Philip Hefner, also trying to bring an interdisciplinary perspective to personhood, characterizes it as such:

Personhood is achieved through our acting upon the physical, biological and cultural materials that we have inherited, so as to establish a center of identity that shapes those materials into an understanding of the self, an understanding of the self’s relation to the world in which it lives and to the people in that world, and into a life that holds itself accountable to those understandings of self, other people, and world.<sup>108</sup>

In this statement, Hefner argues for an understanding of personhood that is interior, relational, biological, cultural, emergent, and moral – Hefner argues that one cannot leave any of these factors out. His approach brings to the table evolutionary science, physicalism, cultural

---

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 56-7.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 49-50.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>108</sup> Philip Hefner, “The Imago Dei: the Possibility and Necessity of the Human Person,” in *The Human Person in Science and Theology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, Willem B. Drees, and Ulf Görman (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 73.

“memes,” personalist philosophy, and Christian theology. He does this because, in his view, the Western tradition of understanding personhood has generally centered around the idea of “spiritual individuality” – meaning, what it means to be a person derives from the human psyche. Hefner argues that this limited view is threatened by modern science, as neuroscience and psychology can explain away such psychological view of personhood.<sup>109</sup> Ultimately, Hefner proposes an idea of personhood as “our openness to our world, which in turn becomes openness to God and to other persons, as well. In relationship and in openness to the world, we become persons.”<sup>110</sup> Such a point of view has the advantage of being compatible with evolutionary science, rather than simply independent of it, which allows Hefner to proclaim both a scientific and theological approach to the person.

These interdisciplinary approaches do a very good job of troubling simple notions of personhood – however, I question the extent to which they are able to construct any determinable understanding of what it means to be a person. Each of these thinkers proposes ways of exploring personhood through scientific, cultural, and philosophical disciplines, but does not account for how these perspectives should be weighted, or how the various methods even reconcile with one another. The ambiguity of meaning surrounding the term “person” is likely to blame for the difficulty in reconciling these perspectives, and I by no means wish to discount the value in investigating humanity through these interdisciplinary ventures. But in claiming that a person has an intrinsic moral value, and that determining the boundaries of personhood is a crucial task for society, one ultimately needs a determining factor – if not just a particular quality, then at least a rationale for identifying a person. I will now present two scholars – David Bentley Hart and John Zizioulas – who argue for a Christological approach to understanding human personhood, and why such a method makes more sense for identifying what makes persons valuable.

### *Christ as Revelation of Personhood*

David Bentley Hart argues that the advent of Christianity brought along with it a radical new metaphysics of personhood – and it was through Christ that this new conception of personhood

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 81-2.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 87.

was understood. To begin with, Hart contrasts the Christian story of salvation with prior understandings of the self's liberation in Greek philosophy. Hart argues that, in Greek metaphysics, the ascent to God was achieved primarily through the mind, and involved "the methodical stripping away of everything truly 'personal' within the self."<sup>111</sup> By contrast, in Christianity, personality is something eternal – Christ saves us by taking on our humanity, and we, as persons, subsequently take on his divinity.<sup>112</sup>

This soteriological vision was the basis for the debates at the Ecumenical Councils, which consistently affirmed Christ's full divinity and full humanity. Hart notes that by considering how Christ was human, the theologians at these councils were led to consider what made any of us human, and thus revolutionized human self-understanding.<sup>113</sup> Christological development thus necessitated a continuous clarification of the inner and outer aspects of the human self – and what was seen as essential in our humanity was inextricably linked to Christology. Hart argues that the most "astonishing" result of Christological development was that of Christ as a person with two natures. He writes:

The rather extraordinary inference to be drawn from this doctrine is that personality is somehow transcendent of nature. A person is not merely a fragment of some larger cosmic or spiritual category, a more perfect or more defective expression of some abstract set of attributes, in light of which his or her value, significance, legitimacy, or proper place is to be judged. This man or that woman is not merely a specimen of the general set of the human; rather, his or her human nature is only one manifestation and one part of what he or she is or might be. And personality is an irreducible mystery, somehow prior to and more spacious than everything that would limit or define it, capable of exceeding even its own nature in order to embrace another, ever more glorious nature.<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>111</sup> David Bentley Hart, *Atheist Delusions*, 208.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

This understanding of personhood, for Hart, gives every person “immense dignity” and an “infinite capacity” for transcendence.<sup>115</sup> What Christ reveals to us is that personhood and nature are distinct concepts, and that personhood is not a characteristic of nature – rather, personhood distinguishes one from human nature. Hart argues that the Christological formulas were emblematic of a larger shift in Christian culture, and were crystallizations of a new way of life shaped by a belief in Christ – and he fears, when looking at what he considers to be a “post-Christian” society, whether the inherent value in human personhood will also soon be a thing of the past.<sup>116</sup>

John Zizioulas also sees Christ as revealing human personhood, and he makes the distinction between person and nature prominent in his writings. For Zizioulas, attempts to define personhood using psychology miss the point. In fact, Zizioulas lists several common concepts of personhood which he rejects, including consciousness, moment of decision, subjectivity, and relationships. Zizioulas’s reasoning is that these qualities are tied to nature, and thus not personhood. Zizioulas draws on the Trinitarian doctrine of three persons (hypostases) in one divine nature to prove this: the Trinity is united in characteristics like will and psychology of being, as these are proper to nature. However, this entails that personhood must mean something different.<sup>117</sup>

It should be noted that Zizioulas’s reasoning here is fundamentally different from the Trinitarian, relational understanding of the *imago Dei* that was critiqued earlier. What Fergusson and Behr objected to in that case was the application of human characteristics to the Trinity (given the similar use of the term “person” in both cases), and then drawing theological statements and insights from this misapplication. Zizioulas is working from the other direction: he argues that the differentiation of hypostases in the Trinity, among a common nature, must be the key to understanding our distinctiveness within our common human nature. And this “top-down” approach is inherently Christological, as Zizioulas writes:

---

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 211.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 212; 215.

<sup>117</sup> John Zizioulas, *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today* (Alhambra, California: Sebastian Press, 2010), 20-1.

Jesus Christ does not justify the title of Savior because he brings the world a beautiful revelation, a sublime teaching about the person, but because He realizes in history *the very reality of the person* and makes it the basis and “hypostasis” of the person for every man.<sup>118</sup>

What it means to be a person is revealed in Christ – as it is the revelation of Christ that leads to the distinction of hypostases in the Trinity, so also the revelation of Christ reveals how humans exist distinctly within their own nature. This is why Zizioulas uses the term *hypostasis* for his discussions of personhood – even though it more properly means “mode of existence,” that is exactly what Zizioulas identifies personhood to mean. To be a person is to exist in a certain mode of being – and for Zizioulas, true personhood is enabled by Christ’s mode of existence. Both Hart and Zizioulas thus see personhood as distinct from human nature – indeed, as transcending nature.

Accordingly, Brian E. Daley, writing about the patristic understanding of “person” as developed in Christological formulations, argues that traditional theology understands this concept much differently than the modern West does, in this illustrative quote:

The two distinct “substances” or “natures” that early theology sees in the person of Christ are, of course, two wholly incommensurable realities— not two parallel species of being competing for central stage. The one does not rule out the other. And the one “person” the church recognizes as “owning” these two substances or natures is not classically understood in the way modern Westerners conceive of a person, defined by being a unique and self-contained pole of consciousness and free decisions, capable of forming relationships with other, equally distinct persons. In the classical understanding of both the triune God and of Jesus Christ, “persons” or hypostases are irreducible individual subjects of predication and attribution; yet the heart of both these Mysteries, for Christian faith, is that the three related “persons” in God share a single consciousness and will, a single

---

<sup>118</sup> John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 54.

substance, and that the one “person” of the incarnate Word possesses both an infinite divine mind and will, and a complete human mind and will like our own.<sup>119</sup>

This exposition of the rationale of traditional Christology substantiates Zizioulas’s assertion that concepts like consciousness and will cannot be attributed to personhood, as well as Hart’s assertion that personhood is irreducible and unique. Personhood for traditional theology is not personhood for modern Western philosophy – which means when engaging in interdisciplinary discussions that involve theology, we have to be careful about which terminology we use. And if we wish to do justice to traditional theology in those discussions, we must start from the concept of personhood that fits into its Christological grammar.

Does all of this lead to a complete independence of personhood from scientific investigation, as scholars such as Watts and Gregersen worry? Potentially, yes – this Christological notion of personhood certainly defines personhood as something that does not stem from scientifically detectable origins. However, I do not think this conception of personhood as transcending human nature necessarily removes personhood as a concept from scientific discussions. Zizioulas and others use the concept of hypostasis as a way of transforming, not disregarding, nature – and the notion of distinguishing personhood from characteristics like consciousness in Christology poses intriguing questions for how we understand characteristics like consciousness, rationality, and selfhood. I will discuss more fully this distinction between personhood and human natural characteristics in the next chapter. Presently, it is important to note that seeing Christ as the foundation of the human person cuts through many extraneous definitions and groundings of personhood that result from speculation on the many ambiguous meanings of “person.” Rather than try and build a conception of a human person from the ground up, using multiple disciplines of inquiry, I argue for a Christological understanding of personhood that begins with traditional theology’s examination of Jesus Christ’s hypostatic existence, and then proceeds from there

---

<sup>119</sup> Brian E. Daley, SJ, “The Word and His Flesh: Weakness and the Identity of Jesus in Greek Patristic Christology” in *Suffering and Evil in Early Christian Thought*, ed. Nonna Verna Harrison and David G. Hunter (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016). *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=4901261>, 150.

toward what is essential in human personhood. Such an understanding secures both the value and dignity of every human person, while also highlighting the distinctiveness between persons.

### **Humanity and the Mind/Soul-Body Relationship**

A third conversation in the science-theology discourse about what it means to be human is that of the key constituent parts of the human being: the body, mind, and soul. Generally, while people often colloquially distinguish the mind from the soul, in the scholarly literature these terms are usually treated as synonymous<sup>120</sup> – as such, this section will use the two terms interchangeably. Essentially, the debate centers around one key issue: how are the human soul and body related to one another? Christian theology has often tended to speak both of the human body and of a human soul. However, current scientific research tends to view humans as only having a body, at least in its epistemological focus: evolutionary biology, genetics, and neuroscience all paint a picture of a singular, material human substance.<sup>121</sup> The human brain can be investigated as a material organ, providing key bodily functions – but the human mind, insofar as it is different from the human brain (which is debatable), or operates according to non-material principles, would not be within this scientific scope.

Hence, a dilemma arises: we tend to view ourselves as more than just our bodies, and Christian theology frequently appeals to the idea of a human soul, which is often differentiated from the body in theological discussions. However, scientific perspectives portray the human body in strictly material terms, without the need to posit a distinct entity of mind or soul. In addition, neurological studies have isolated specific parts of the brain responsible for things such as language, emotion, and decision-making – characteristics that have been traditionally allocated to the mind.<sup>122</sup> If the mind is apparently able to be subject to material causes, then a perspective that holds the mind and body as completely separate entities is not acceptable. There must be some way to account for the interaction between the mind and the body. In this section, I will show that many scholars are abandoning traditional dualism and making contemporary science a

---

<sup>120</sup> Ritchie, *Divine Action and the Human Mind*, 19-20.

<sup>121</sup> Nancey Murphy, “Human Nature: Historical, Scientific, and Religious Issues,” in *Whatever Happened to the Soul?: Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature*, ed. Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Malony (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

primary determining factor in coming up with scientifically plausible accounts of the mind-body relationship, while still preserving a special or distinct concept of the mind. However, I will then present the case of the controversy surrounding whether or not Christ had a soul, and I will argue that by starting with Christology, one must value different aspects of the debate than those simply trying to reconcile the body and mind, if one wishes to find theologically satisfying answers.

### *Christianity and Dualism*

The relationship between the mind/soul and the body is another long-standing debate in the tradition of Western thought, and the position of Christian theology on this issue is not explicitly clear. Scholars have noted that the two main cultural influences on Christianity – Hebrew and Greek – had two very different views of the human being. In the Hebrew Bible, the human was an essential physical unity, with any references to the soul referring to the animating life of the unity, not a discrete substance.<sup>123</sup> By contrast, the idea of a separate, detachable soul that could preserve identity without the body is seen to originate in Greek metaphysics of the human person.<sup>124</sup> Nancey Murphy notes that this is an oversimplification – there were many different Greek philosophical accounts of the soul, and they were not all dualistic. Aristotle, for instance, saw the soul as the form of the body, meaning that the soul is the principle which gives the body its essential characteristics. On the other hand, Plato advocated for a pre-existent soul which is imprisoned in the body and returns to the eternal realm after death.<sup>125</sup> Plato's soul was notably tripartite, in which “reason” (the highest part of the soul) rules over the two lower parts: “spirit” (gr. *thumos*) in the sense of liveliness or passion, and the “appetite” in the sense of impulses and desires.<sup>126</sup> Such a model not only conceives of the mind and body as distinct, but also conceives of the mind as an ordered reality that interacts and governs the body at different levels.

While early Christian theologians spoke of the soul in different ways, Augustine, arguably the most influential theologian on Western culture, adopted a somewhat Platonic view of the soul

---

<sup>123</sup> Mark Harris, “When Jesus lost his soul: Fourth-Century Christology and Modern Neuroscience,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 70,1 (2017): 76.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>125</sup> Murphy, “Human Nature,” 2-4.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

and body, in which the soul and body are distinct, and the soul uses the body as an agent uses a tool.<sup>127</sup> The influence of Plato's tripartite conception of the soul can also be seen in various Eastern patristic theologians' conception of the soul as possessing sensory, rational, and noetic powers (noetic referring to spiritual perception).<sup>128</sup> While these Plato-inspired models, and especially Augustine's position regarding them, were to prove highly influential, it is not clear that Christianity need accept a strong dualistic position on the soul-body issue, nor even derive its understanding of the soul from Platonic conceptions. Aquinas, for instance, took up the Aristotelian position that the soul is the form of the body.<sup>129</sup> Likewise, many theologians today lament the Greek influence on Christian thought, and argue that the Hebrew Bible's more monistic view should be determinative for Christian metaphysics of the human.<sup>130</sup> Others push back against such a claim, arguing that Christianity has essential claims that require dualism, such as God's action in the world, angels and demons, and the preservation of the soul between death and the resurrection.<sup>131</sup> Needless to say, there is no single clear Christian position on the soul-body issue, and contemporary scholars make good use of this ambiguity in their own proposals, as we will see below.

Arguably though, the most influential account of dualism in the modern era comes from Descartes. Descartes had an atomist physical perspective, which rejected the Aristotelian union of form and matter, and instead saw reality as primarily consisting of substances moved by external forces. As such, Descartes argued that the mind and the body were two different substances: the body was an extended substance (like the rest of visible matter) and the mind was a thinking substance (as were angels).<sup>132</sup> Descartes's physics would prove to foreshadow the mechanical, physical picture of the universe that most of us accept – his conception of the mind, however, would not withstand his physical point of view. The obvious question that results from such a conception of the mind and body is how the mind can cause the body to do anything,

---

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

<sup>128</sup> Norman Russell, *Fellow Workers with God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009), 84.

<sup>129</sup> Murphy, "Human Nature," 5.

<sup>130</sup> Harris, "When Jesus lost his soul," 76.

<sup>131</sup> J.P. Moreland, "Christianity, Neuroscience, and Dualism," in *The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity*, edited by J.B. Stump and Alan G. Padgett (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 467.

<sup>132</sup> Murphy, "Human Nature," 7.

given that they are different kinds of substances, and that all causal interactions are now seen as engendered by physical forces. Murphy sums up the problem nicely:

Now there is a dilemma: hold on to the immateriality of mind, and there is then no way to account for its supposed ability to move the body; interpret it as a quasi-physical force and its effects ought to be measurable and quantifiable as is any other force in nature. But nothing of the latter enters into modern physics.<sup>133</sup>

Cartesian dualism is arguably the specter that hangs over contemporary discussions of the mind-body problem – indeed, the mind-body problem’s very existence is likely due to the physicalist revolution that took place in science, thus demanding an account for the mind that Cartesian dualism could not satisfactorily offer. As such, contemporary scholars have largely rejected strict Cartesian dualism in favor of approaches that do enable scientific explanations of the relationship between the mind and the body.<sup>134</sup>

#### *Attempts to Solve the Mind-Body Problem*

One straightforward way to address the mind-body problem is to deny the existence of a distinct mind. Patricia Churchland, for instance, argues for a heavily physical, reductionist view of the brain in which everything commonly attributed to the mind – thought, consciousness, will, concepts Churchland calls “folk psychology” – will eventually be explainable by brain processes.<sup>135</sup> Such an approach solves the problem by simply recasting the human body as a monistic, physically-determined entity. This solution seems difficult to reconcile with Christian theology – as noted before, Christian theology generally suggests some kind of conception of a soul, and that humans are enabled by God with real qualities of will and thought. As such, Christian scholars generally wish to preserve the distinctiveness of the mind, while still finding a scientifically-acceptable solution to the mind-body problem.

---

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>134</sup> Although substance dualism still holds appeal to some – I will examine such views more in Chapter 2.

<sup>135</sup> Patricia Churchland, *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind-Brain* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1986), 481-2.

Murphy proposes a view called “non-reductive physicalism,” which is an entirely physical account of the mind and body, but not reductive in the sense that science could explain away the mind. For non-reductive physicalists, the brain is the locus of all mental activities, and mental events are mapped to some physical events: think of the way in which certain portions of the brain light up on scanners when certain mental actions are performed. However, Murphy argues, because there are no laws that determine how every mental event could be identified with specific physical events, the mental cannot be reduced to physical processes. In this way, Murphy preserves causal interaction between mind and body through the brain, without reducing the mind to the brain.<sup>136</sup> An issue with non-reductive physicalism is whether or not it is true that there are no laws mapping mental states to brain activities: a reductionist may argue that, at some point, neuroscientists will discover those laws, and then non-reductive physicalism will be revealed as having been a “mind-of-the-gaps” argument.

A similar approach is through the emphasizing the concept of emergence: the idea that when constituent elements of a system are arranged in a particular way, something new comes into being.<sup>137</sup> Emergent systems, essentially, are more than the sum of their parts – the proper arrangement of the parts creates a distinctively new whole. An emergent approach to the mind-body problem thus claims that the mind is an emergent property of the body. William Hasker, for instance, argues for a form of “emergent dualism” in which the proper arrangement of the human body gives rise to a new individual, which then operates within a unity of consciousness. He contrasts this to an “emergent materialism,” in which properties of mind, such as reason and will, simply emerge from human material processes, and belong as properties to the material constituents of humanity.<sup>138</sup> In a similar vein, Philip Clayton argues for “emergent monism,” in which the material human substance is all that exists as a psycho-somatic unity, but the psychological properties cannot be reduced to the somatic ones.<sup>139</sup> All of the emergentist explanations function as ways of preserving a scientifically describable unity of the human person, while still preserving the mind as a non-reducible entity. One could argue, however, that

---

<sup>136</sup> Murphy, “Human Nature,” 10-11.

<sup>137</sup> William Hasker, “The Emergence of Persons,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity*, ed. J.B. Stump and Alan G. Padgett, (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 481.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, 483-4.

<sup>139</sup> Philip Clayton, “Neuroscience, the Person, and God: An Emergentist Account” *Zygon* 35,3 (2000): 643-5.

the notion of the soul that comes from such an emergent picture is not satisfactory for Christian theology due to its irreconcilability with certain claims. For example, consider the theological claim that the soul persists after the death of the body: it is hard to see how an emergent mind could be preserved after the death of the body (though an emergentist may just reject that particular theological claim).

Another way to address the mind-body problem is to break down the differences between the mental and material, not just in the human being, but in the rest of reality as a complete metaphysical system. Joanna Leidenhag argues that panpsychism is way of reconceiving the entire universe such that there is no separation between “material” and “mental.” Panpsychism is the idea that the physical constituents of the universe have mental properties, or that consciousness is fundamental to everything in reality.<sup>140</sup> The advantage of this view, Leidenhag argues, is that there are no “ontological jumps” like in emergence theories – in which material processes suddenly produce non-material entities – and panpsychism also enables a pervasion of the universe with God’s activity, thus eliminating the causal gap between God and the world,<sup>141</sup> and thus similarly eliminating the gap between the mind and body. Leidenhag affirms that such a view of the universe is entirely compatible with the Christian metaphysics of the Trinitarian God, and that it situates the mind-body problem in its larger scientific context: as human bodies are made from the same material as the rest of the universe, panpsychism addresses how mentality can exist at all, not just in the specific instance of humanity. In other words, if one takes evolutionary and neurological science seriously, then all of materiality is implicated in the mind-body problem – and panpsychism addresses this by attesting to an underlying consciousness throughout the entire universe.<sup>142</sup>

Sarah Lane Ritchie, by contrast, achieves a similar solution to the mind-body problem with her proposal of “theistic naturalism.” For Ritchie, theistic naturalism involves three commitments:

---

<sup>140</sup> Joanna Leidenhag, “The Revival of Panpsychism and its Relevance for the Science-Religion Dialogue,” *Theology and Science* 17,1 (2019): 92.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, 103.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, 103; 92-3.

(1) a denial that nature is, by default, an autonomous, self-sufficient entity apart from divine presence and action; (2) an affirmation that all of nature is inherently involved with God at all times – though perhaps in varying intensities and with varying physical effects; and (3) an affirmation that physicality is to be affirmed, rather than feared (in the mindbrain and elsewhere), precisely because the physical participates in God.<sup>143</sup>

In a similar way to Leidenhag, Ritchie affirms a view of the material world that is intimately connected to God – however, instead of postulating an underlying subjectivity in the world, she simply rejects the idea that reality need be any more than physical. For Ritchie, the human mind can be fully physical and still be theologically significant in the ways Christianity wants it to be, because Christianity affirms that the physical world is not separate from God.<sup>144</sup> In this sense, both Leidenhag and Ritchie propose views that remove the metaphysical basis for the mind-body problem – instead of the human mind being “special” from the rest of material nature, the human mind becomes fully natural, and the natural is inherently theological.

These solutions by Leidenhag and Ritchie are very appealing, especially given the way they simultaneously affirm a completely theological and completely scientific understanding of the human being. Specific doctrinal questions, such as the persistence of the soul after death, do linger, and panpsychism likely answers them more easily – theistic naturalism would have to put more emphasis on the resurrection of the body. However, this note underscores a key problem that has undergirded all of these solutions to the mind-body problem. Each solution attempts to solve the issue as to how a non-material mind can interact with a material body – but then, each solution must also respond to specific Christian doctrinal interests about the soul. In attempting to reconcile the existence of the soul within existing scientific frameworks, these scholars leave aside for later the question as to why the soul is important for Christian theology. As with the last two sections of this chapter, I will now look at how the contours of the debate change when starting with Christ as the measure of humanity – and that means looking at how Christian theology understands Christ to have a human soul. As mentioned above, Christological

---

<sup>143</sup> Ritchie, *Divine Action and the Human Mind*, 340-1.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*, 349.

development corresponded to a clarification of essential human anthropology, both in its inward and outward characteristics.<sup>145</sup> To this end, I present Mark Harris and his work on the 4<sup>th</sup> century Apollinarian controversy, and how he views this as important to the contemporary mind-body conversation.

### *Christ's Mind and the Apollinarian Controversy*

Harris suggests that issues of the substance and form of the human soul are of “secondary theological importance”<sup>146</sup> when seen in light of the Apollinarian Christological controversy. Apollinarius, a theologian attempting to oppose Arianism with an argument for Christ’s full divinity, argued that Jesus Christ was the Logos of God in the flesh – without any corresponding human mind/soul. Rather, for Apollinarius, the divine Logos takes the place of a rational human soul in Christ. Such a Christology ensures a unified, single Christ capable of connecting humanity with God – but more so, it precludes the possibility of sin in Christ. Apollinarius believed that the human mind is inherently sinful and swayed by sin, and thus a Christ with a human mind would be incapable of saving humanity; only an eternal, sinless mind could act as our Savior from sin.<sup>147</sup> Thus, by submitting to Christ intellectually, humans can appropriate his divine mind for themselves (in a sort of imitative sense), and also rein in their sinful flesh.<sup>148</sup>

Apollinarius’s Christology was strongly opposed by the Cappadocian fathers Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa, who argued that Christ possessed a human soul just like ours, and that the presence of such a soul is crucial to our salvation. Gregory of Nazianzus famously stated “That which is not assumed is not healed; but that which is united to his Godhead is also saved,” underscoring the importance of Christ sharing human nature so as to heal and redeem it.<sup>149</sup> For the Cappadocians, Christ saves humanity through human nature, not in spite of it. Harris argues that Apollinarius’s Christ is therefore deficient, as is Apollinarius’s soteriology:

---

<sup>145</sup> Hart, *Atheist Delusions*, 210.

<sup>146</sup> Harris, “When Jesus lost his soul,” 77.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, 77-8.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, 79.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid*, 80.

Apollinarius' soul-less Christ was a being who was more-than-human but was actually less-than-human in anthropological terms: he had no means of experiencing sin, nor even of comprehending it fully in a truly 'human' way. Ordinary Christians might have been able to apprehend the mind of Christ intellectually in Apollinarius' soteriology, but since the mind of Christ itself was unable to apprehend sin at first hand, it was unclear that Christ could apprehend ordinary humans, still less help them.<sup>150</sup>

As Harris notes, by removing any capability of Christ to sin through the mind, Apollinarius makes it impossible for mental sins to be atoned for – Harris describes the mind as a “battleground” on which salvation is to either be won or lost, and if it is taken away, Christ is “pointless.”<sup>151</sup> Regarding salvation, Harris notes that the soteriology of the Cappadocians is deification, in which a Christian dynamically grows and ascends further and further into the likeness of Christ – and this requires the human intellect to be able contemplate the divine. Because the human mind has been healed in Christ, it can lead the Christian towards a deification of the whole human person.<sup>152</sup>

The conclusion Harris draws from this is that the current debates over mind-body interaction and whether the mind and body are distinct substances are overlooking the whole point, theologically speaking. He writes:

Any theological anthropology must find an effective means of incorporating the full breadth of the human condition, especially of sin. Discussions of substance and form might be philosophically satisfying but they are theologically insufficient: if the human condition needs saving, then we must be clear what it needs saving from.<sup>153</sup>

---

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, 81.

While the Church Fathers did not ignore questions on the existence and nature of the soul, Harris notes that it was ultimately of secondary importance to them: the soteriological concern was far more important.<sup>154</sup> And by starting with the question of whether Christ possessed a human soul, the Cappadocian Fathers were able to articulate a clear anthropology in which human beings must deal with sin in both body and mind and achieve salvation through full unity with Christ.

Harris thus concludes that the contemporary mind-body debate must engage with the reality of sin and salvation. While he does not argue for one specific form of mind-body interaction – he does not believe dualist positions are necessary, and would prefer a monist and holistic position to engage with contemporary science – he does note that this Christological vision necessitates a distinct mind and body in some way, for a fully physicalist perspective has trouble accounting for sin. Overall, Harris entreats the mind-body discussion not to miss the plot: discussions of the soul should focus less on the nature of the “thing” itself, and more on the soul’s significance in the human experience of sin and deification, with which all Christians must existentially grapple.<sup>155</sup>

Taking a Christological approach thus reveals very different priorities for discussions of the mind and the body. Ultimately, there is a need for some existence of a human soul and human body, but from this Christological perspective, what is important is the relationship of the soul and body to sin and salvation. While I do not think the contemporary solutions to the mind-body interaction problem are futile, I do find Harris’s perspective to be helpful in redirecting the conversation closer toward matters of theological importance. Furthermore, as touched upon earlier, the doctrine that Christ has a human soul raises several questions about the relationship between mind, consciousness, personhood, and the essential “I,” given what was said above about the difference between person and nature. I will revisit these further thoughts on the soul and personhood in the next chapter, and on the relationship of the mind to sin in Chapter 6 – but presently, it will suffice to claim that beginning an investigation of the mind and body with the relevant Christological doctrines changes what we deem to be the important issues at stake, and it arguably puts more focus on the moral and experiential aspects of the human condition.

---

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, 89-90.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 91.

## Conclusion

All three of these science-theology conversations – the *imago Dei*, personhood, and mind/soul-body interaction – approach the question of what it means to be a human being in different ways. However, by making Christ the starting point in discussions of humanity, the contours of these conversations change significantly, and certain elements are brought into sharper focus.

Ultimately, if Christ is the revelation of what it means to be truly and fully human, then it is hard to theologically justify discussions of humanity that do not start by considering Christ. Also, I would submit that making Christology primary in each of the three conversations above yields more satisfactory answers to many of the key questions in each conversation. Seeing Christ as the *imago Dei* has scriptural support, encompasses a number of diffuse understandings of humanity, and grounds human identity in a clear eschatological end. To claim that human personhood is revealed in Christ's mode of existence, not within human nature, is to claim that every human being, regardless of cognitive or cultural constitution, is distinctive and valuable in an unalterable way. And rather than puzzling over how the mind and body exist as either separate or unified "things," examining the importance of Christ's human soul reframes discussions of the mind and body around salvation, the human condition, and the drama of human experience.

Such an approach is unquestionably dependent on a theologically dogmatic perspective – however, if one does wish to engage contemporary psychology from a traditional theological perspective, I propose starting with an understanding of traditional Christology. As Christ reveals what it means to be human, I submit that introducing Christology to frame the conversation between psychology and theology is the best approach to discussing humanity, and yields the most satisfactory results.

## Chapter 2: Human Nature and Personhood in Christology<sup>156</sup>

### Introduction

The previous chapter established how three conversations in the science-theology discourse concerning what it means to be human – the *imago Dei*, the mind/soul-body problem, and personhood – can be reframed by viewing those conversations through the lens of Christology. To continue this approach of making Christ’s true and full humanity axiomatic in discussions about what it means to be human, this chapter will examine how Christology can illuminate the difficult and fraught issues surrounding human personhood and constitution. While I have laid out the general contours of these conversations in the previous chapter, this chapter will dive deeper into the question of what it means to be a human person, from a science-theology perspective. As previously mentioned, terminology can be rather nebulous on this issue, as words such as “self,” “person,” “subject,” and “agent” all hover around this target phenomenon with different shades of nuance. Essentially, the question I address in this chapter is what constitutes individual human personhood – or, stated more loosely: what makes me, me?

To make Christology primary in answering this question also means to consider how Christological terminology is used to understand both Christ and the rest of humanity. This chapter thus pivots around the Christological distinction between personhood (Gr. *prosopon/hypostasis*) and nature (Gr. *physis*) that is made in the Chalcedonian Definition, in which Christ is professed to be a single person in two natures, divine and human. This distinction is largely ignored by contemporary science-theology literature, with the consequence that theological conceptions of human personhood become difficult to pin down and to relate with science, while also becoming unmoored from doctrinal foundations. Some may argue that such terminology is antiquated and not relevant to the contemporary discourse.<sup>157</sup> I argue that a Christologically-informed conception of humanity’s constitution should take seriously the terminology of nature/*physis* and person/*prosopon/hypostasis*, and not only because such an approach ensures solid grounding within the tradition of classical Christology. Rather, before one

---

<sup>156</sup> An earlier version of this chapter has been published pre-print online open access in *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* under the title “Energies and Personhood: A Christological Perspective on Human Identity.” (<https://doi.org/10.1111/zygo.12795>)

<sup>157</sup> See F. LeRon Shults’s comments cited in my introduction.

ignores these terms – personhood and nature, and their traditional theological content – it is important to understand the deeper rationale for why traditional Christology professes this distinction between personhood and nature at all; that rationale is essential to engaging traditional Christian theology with science while preserving the former’s internal doctrinal coherence.

In this chapter, I first introduce the Christological distinction between personhood and nature. I show how, per this distinction, several features that current science-theology scholars discuss with reference to personhood actually have their reference primarily to human nature. This means there is confusion of theological terms, and this confusion leads to some troubling implications. I offer some examples of scholars making problematic characterizations of theological personhood, but also note the troubling implications of taking this Christological distinction seriously. To address these concerns, I offer a proposal for understanding humanity through the relationship between natural energies (Gr. *energeia*) and personhood, drawing from the thought of the Eastern Orthodox theologian Christos Yannaras. This proposal presents a view of humanity that is Christologically informed, addresses several of the difficulties present in the science-theology scholarship surrounding human personhood, and gives a theological characterization of humanity that can be productively engaged with contemporary scientific understandings of humanity. This proposal also emphasizes the importance of the theological concept of personhood, and I conclude with some thoughts as to the importance of this concept for engaging theology with science.

### **The Christological Distinction between Personhood and Human Nature**

Traditional Christology describes the constitution of Jesus Christ through Greek metaphysical terms such as *hypostasis*, *prosopon*, and *physis*. Even if we do not use these terms in our culture today, what they meant and how they were used by Christians when these doctrines were being promulgated are still crucial for understanding how theology conceives what it means to be human and what it means to possess personal identity. Gregersen even notes that Christological reflection, specifically reflection on the Chalcedonian Definition, contributed significantly to the development of the very concept of personhood: he argues that, understood through reflection on the singular identity of Christ, personhood becomes “the self-identity or 'character' of a being,

even if a person consists of different 'elements' and may develop through a longer period of time.”<sup>158</sup>

The Chalcedonian Definition distinguishes between Christ’s singular personhood, and yet his dual existence in both divine and human natures:

Following therefore the holy fathers we all teach with one voice the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in divinity and the same perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly human, having a rational soul and a body, the same consubstantial (*homoousion*) with the Father according to his divinity and consubstantial (*homoousion*) with us according to his humanity, like us in all things except sin. The same was begotten from the Father before the ages according to his divinity and from Mary, the Virgin Theotokos, in the last days, for us and for our salvation, according to his humanity; one and the same Christ, Lord, only-begotten Son, acknowledged in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation. At no point was the difference between the natures ever removed because of the union, but rather the property of each nature is preserved and concurs into one person (*prosopon*) and a single subsistence (*hypostasis*). He is not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only-begotten God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ, just as the prophets from the beginning have taught us, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and the symbol of the fathers that has been handed down to us.<sup>159</sup>

By claiming that Christ is a single person, but existing in two natures, the Chalcedonian Definition draws a theological distinction between how these two concepts – personhood and nature – can be used to describe humanity. Nature cannot be simply equivalent to personhood, as that would violate the logic of this confession. That means that characteristics proper to nature cannot be constitutive of personhood; this creates problems when considering the numerous

---

<sup>158</sup> Gregersen, “Varieties of Personhood,” 8-9.

<sup>159</sup> Translation presented in Khaled Anatolios, “The Christ of the Creeds” in *The Blackwell Companion to Jesus*, ed. Delbert Burkett (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 184-5.

characteristics traditional Christology applies to Christ's human nature, and not being able to equate them with his person. I will explore both of these elements of Christ's constitution – personhood and nature – in turn, to reveal why this Christological distinction is essential to heed.

### *Christ's Singular Personhood*

The Chalcedonian Definition confesses Christ as having a singular identity – he is confessed as having only one *prosopon* and one *hypostasis*. As mentioned in the previous chapter, these two terms had slightly different meanings in early Christian thought – *prosopon*'s being more directly personhood, with *hypostasis*'s being more like “individual subsistence” – but the Chalcedonian affirmation of the singularity of both in Christ results in them being essentially equated throughout subsequent theological development. By emphasizing one Christ, Chalcedon and later Christological developments exclude the possibility of conceptualizing Christ as the coinciding of two distinct persons or subjects – the Word of God and the human Jesus of Nazareth.

This dual-subject Christology is most famously associated with the Antiochene theological school, whose proponents were involved in the debates that clarified Christology from the 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Antiochenes emphasized the full reality of Christ's humanity as well as its distinctiveness from the divine nature. As Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross, and as it is not possible for divinity to suffer or die, the Antiochenes claimed that the “assumed man” of Jesus of Nazareth suffered and died, and not the Word of God. Such a claim could still confess that Christ was a single person, for *prosopon* had connotations of “mask,” like those worn on stage – Christ was a single mask in which two essentially different persons, the Word and the man, coincided.<sup>160</sup> While such a Christological approach does preserve the full humanity and full divinity of Christ, the church rejected it on the grounds that salvation of humanity could only come through true union with God: the humanity that was assumed by the Word was truly his own, not that of another's merely cooperating with him.<sup>161</sup> The doctrine of the “hypostatic union” thus asserts that Christ was a single person, a singular subsistent reality.

---

<sup>160</sup> John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Washington, DC: Corpus Publications, 1969), 5-7.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

The Chalcedonian Definition affirms this with its profession of one *hypostasis* – and the Second Council of Constantinople, held a century after Chalcedon in the wake of much subsequent debate, affirms that the one hypostasis of Chalcedon is the exact same hypostasis as the Son of God as confessed in the doctrine of the Trinity. In other words, the personhood of the Word of God and the personhood of the human Jesus of Nazareth are one and the same – there is no interruption or change.<sup>162</sup> Jesus Christ is thus one *prosopon*, one *hypostasis*, and this singular identity is that of the Word of God. This extends even through Christ’s suffering and death: the historian John Meyendorff writes that “The pre-existent Word is the *subject* of the death of Christ, for in Christ there is no other personal subject apart from the Word: only *someone* can die, not something, or a nature, or the flesh.”<sup>163</sup> Formulas such as “God died” are thus theologically acceptable, assuming they refer to the phenomenon of the Incarnate Christ, precisely to highlight the personal unity of Christ.

What this also means is that there is no distinctly human hypostasis or personhood in Christ. A hypostasis is not a product of nature, but rather is what gives abstract nature a concrete expression – and Christ’s human nature is given expression by the hypostasis of the Word of God.<sup>164</sup> A much fuller account of the soteriological implications of this idea is outside the scope of this thesis; presently, it will suffice to emphasize that traditional Christology holds to Christ’s singular personhood, and rejects the idea that Christ’s humanity has its own, distinct personhood.

### *Christ’s Fully Human Nature*

Traditional Christology, however, also affirms that Christ’s human nature is true and full, not lacking any characteristic proper to humanity. To understand why it makes this profession, it is helpful to understand the soteriological presupposition of the Church Fathers, which was that salvation is essentially healing achieved through sharing and participation. John Behr notes that two central axioms thus guided the reflection of the Church Fathers on salvation: first, only God can save; and second, only as a human being can God save human beings. Both of these axioms are fulfilled in the person of Christ, who is simultaneously fully divine and fully human:

---

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 52-3.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, 57.

Christ, by sharing in the poverty of the human condition, enables human beings to share in the riches of his divine life, to become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4). The interplay between these two axioms can be seen in many of the familiar patristic dicta, such as Athanasius’ statement, “He became man, so that we might become god,” and Gregory of Nazianzus’ rejoinder to Apollinarius, “What is not assumed, is not healed.” Like is healed and saved by like. Following through the logic of these two axioms leads inexorably to Chalcedon.<sup>165</sup>

As Behr notes, the Chalcedonian assertion of Christ’s fully human nature is a culmination of theological reflection on the basic conviction that Christ is human in the same way we are human – from the beginning, the church defended the humanity of Christ against theologies that removed some feature of humanity from the person of Christ. As David Bentley Hart says, “If any natural aspect of our shared humanity...was absent from the incarnate God, then to that degree our nature has never entered into communion with his and has not been refashioned in him.”<sup>166</sup>

As such, arguments that Christ possesses a fully human characteristic amount to arguments that such a characteristic is a constituent of our human nature. However, this means that these characteristics cannot themselves constitute a person, since, as mentioned above, that would imply a human person was assumed by the Logos, violating Christ’s singular personhood. For example, the Third Council of Constantinople affirms that Christ possesses two wills, the divine will and a human will. The presence of a fully human will in Christ means that the will is part of human nature, and thus cannot constitute personhood – and as such, we cannot define our personhood by our wills. Other fully human characteristics which traditional Christology has argued were assumed by Christ for our salvation include: a physical body; a fully human mind or

---

<sup>165</sup> John Behr, *The Way to Nicaea: The Formation of Christian Theology: Vol.1* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), 75-6

<sup>166</sup> David Bentley Hart, *Atheist Delusions*, 209.

soul; growth and development; learning<sup>167</sup> and limited knowledge;<sup>168</sup> experience of emotion, passion, and suffering;<sup>169</sup> consciousness;<sup>170</sup> active energy; and describability.<sup>171</sup> By claiming that Christ has assumed each of these characteristics in a truly and fully human way, such that they are redeemed in our human nature, traditional Chalcedonian Christology has defined these characteristics as distinct from personhood, which means that none of them can be constitutive of personhood.

### **The Implications of the Person-Nature Distinction for Science and Theology**

This distinction has, I argue, important implications for the science-theology discourse around personal identity. If science-theology scholars are to address human personhood, whether philosophically or by using scientific research, they should recognize this theological distinction and be cautious about whether they are engaging with aspects of human nature or personhood – and yet, many do not. I will briefly engage with two strands of science-theology approaches to personal identity – substance dualist approaches and multifaceted approaches – and show why each of these strands of approaching human personhood, while appealing in their own ways, ultimately comes into conflict with the Christological considerations I have put forth.

#### *Substance Dualist Approaches to Personhood*

As mentioned in the previous chapter, while many theologians have turned away from substance dualism in explaining the soul, substance dualism remains an attractive option to many precisely because of their consideration for Christian dogmatic concerns. Substance dualists tend to ground personhood in a separate, non-material substance (the soul) so as to define one's identity separately from the ever-changing nature of the material body. Richard Swinburne, in arguing against a purely material account of humanity, claims that the soul is the constitutive part of human personal identity:

---

<sup>167</sup> John Meyendorff, "New Life in Christ: Salvation in Orthodox Theology," *Theological Studies* 50,3 (1989): 494-495.

<sup>168</sup> Demetrios Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 154.

<sup>169</sup> Meyendorff, "New Life in Christ," 494.

<sup>170</sup> John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), 48.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

I am my soul plus whatever brain (and body) it is connected to. Normally my soul goes when my brain goes, but in unusual circumstances (such as when my brain is split) it is uncertain where it goes. So long as I continue to have thoughts and feelings and purposes, I have survived any operation—whatever happens to any particular physical parts of me. So my soul is the essential part of me—its survival is necessary and sufficient for me to survive.<sup>172</sup>

Swinburne argues that what constitutes his identity, his essential “I,” is constituted by the soul and its functions: thoughts, feelings and purposes. Consciousness, therefore, is not proper to the physical brain and its functions, but to the substance of the soul. Swinburne’s reasoning is an attempt to detach personal identity and consciousness from pure physicalism, and to assert that “there must be more to me than the matter of which my body and brain are made, a further essential non-physical part whose continuing in existence is necessary for the brain (and so body) ... to be my brain (and body).”<sup>173</sup> What Swinburne’s logic leads to, however, is a denial of any essentiality of the human body for personhood: one’s body is a contingent and auxiliary part of oneself. Swinburne asserts that one could exist entirely without a body, or any physical substratum – denying the supervenience of mental properties on the physical – and thus claims that we can describe ourselves as “pure mental substances.”<sup>174</sup> While Swinburne allows that the body is a natural part of being a human being, when it comes to understanding personal identity, he goes so far as to say we could think of ourselves as souls causally connected to bodies.<sup>175</sup>

Such a position is not rare among Christian thinkers – indeed, Alvin Plantinga argues that all Christian philosophers should be dualists. Plantinga sees substance dualism as the proper alternative to a strict scientific materialism, and he argues that such a materialism is contrary to the Christian tradition.<sup>176</sup> These assertions are highly contestable, but Plantinga certainly argues

---

<sup>172</sup> Richard Swinburne, “Substance Dualism,” *Faith and Philosophy* 26,5 (2009): 507.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, 507.

<sup>174</sup> Richard Swinburne, “From Mental/Physical Identity to Substance Dualism,” in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 162.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*, 163.

<sup>176</sup> Alvin Plantinga, “Materialism and Christian Belief,” in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 99-100.

against any idea that our identity could be constituted by our physical bodies. One key argument he makes is to question whether one could have all of the matter replaced in one's body, and yet still have a subjective continuity of identity. If this seems improbable, Plantinga notes, consider if it occurred piece by piece, like the famous Ship of Theseus problem: if God decided to replace you one cell at a time, would there ever be a time when your personal identity lapsed? Plantinga asserts that this replacement argument is made stronger by advances in modern science: not only is modern medicine expanding its transplant abilities, in which new organs and prostheses can be added to bits of body you have lost, but also science now understands how much matter is naturally exchanged out of one's body throughout the course of a normal life.<sup>177</sup> By some accounts, Plantinga notes, all the matter in one's body is replaced by normal processes in a matter of years<sup>178</sup> – so how can one place any continuity of identity in matter? For Plantinga, such an argument necessitates dualism as an alternative to the inherent instability of a materialist account of human personhood.

The desire to remove personhood from the vicissitudes and transience of a material, physical body is understandable in many ways. And, as noted above, there are theological rationales for such a desire – for Swinburne, this removal of the body from being a constituent of personal identity safeguards his hope in the Resurrection: “it is only the continuing existence of my soul after my death which would make possible the resurrection of a body which is mine; that would consist in a body being joined again to my soul.”<sup>179</sup> If in death one's body is destroyed, then in the Resurrection one is given a new, resurrected body – and that could only still be one's body, Swinburne argues, if it is attached to one's soul. Swinburne's position can be seen to be a response to both scientific and theological grounds – by removing his personhood from the body, he preserves it in the event of bodily change, but he also preserves his own personhood through whatever transformations may occur in the eschatological Resurrection.

One issue with dualism, from a scientific perspective, is that this non-material substance is essentially inaccessible to empirical investigations, and thus seems to close down any

---

<sup>177</sup> Ibid, 102-4.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, 104.

<sup>179</sup> Swinburne, “Substance Dualism,” 513.

engagement with or critique from science. Given the psychological and cognitive sciences' research and insight into human consciousness and mental workings – and the relationship between those workings and the body – it is difficult to imagine a complete detachment of consciousness and its activities from materiality. Another issue from a theological perspective, as we saw in the last chapter, is that theology has accommodated plenty of other non-dualistic positions in addressing the mind/soul-body problem – substance dualism is by no means the only position theology has taken, and a strictly Cartesian separation between mind and body is very arguably foreign to the Christian tradition.

However, the far more pressing concern with this approach for this chapter is that according to the above Christological distinction between personhood and nature, both the soul and functions of consciousness, regardless of whether they are considered physical or of another substance, are considered parts of human nature, as Christ possessed a fully human soul and consciousness. Thus, soul and consciousness cannot constitute the singular personal identity Swinburne and Plantinga desire, as then Christ would have two identities. Considered Christologically, the soul and its functions are distinct from personhood.

It is likely for this reason, as Mark Harris notes, that some scholars today see merit in Apollinarian arguments that the Logos simply replaces the human soul in Christ, thus constituting his singular personhood<sup>180</sup> – it is an easier position to conceptualize than to believe that Christ is the eternal Logos and yet has a fully human soul as well. But traditional Chalcedonian Christology has consistently emphasized the full reality of Christ's human consciousness and all that it entails. The conclusion is, as Meyendorff notes, that it is “impossible to identify the hypostasis with the concepts of (self-) consciousness or of intellect.”<sup>181</sup> The distinction between personhood and human nature means that one cannot simply ground personhood in any natural characteristics – including the body, consciousness, soul, or will – for such a move would violate the principles of Chalcedonian Christology. Substance dualists, as well as any scholars who attempt to ground personhood in the soul, mind, or even the physical body, are neglecting what Christology has revealed about the difference

---

<sup>180</sup> Mark Harris, “When Jesus Lost his Soul,” 80.

<sup>181</sup> Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 63.

between human nature and personhood. In this way, both sides of the substance dualism-physicalism debate neglect Chalcedon if they ground personal identity in any aspect of human nature.

### *Multifaceted Approaches to Personhood*

A different set of approaches to personhood see it as a complex phenomenon, constituted by several different factors, many of them empirical and accessible to scientific investigation. Such approaches acknowledge the wealth of information that science provides about human biology and psychology, and try to integrate it into our understanding of our own personhoods. For example, J. Wentzel van Huyssteen sees insights from Darwinian evolution as capable of shedding light on what it means to be a self, or person. For Van Huyssteen, the evolution of sexuality, morality, the religious disposition, and language and music are all crucial to human personhood and notions of the self.<sup>182</sup> By grounding these qualities in biological origins, and asserting the importance of the “embodied self,” Van Huyssteen stresses that the uniqueness of humanity is understood in relation to its essential biological continuity with the rest of embodied life<sup>183</sup> – Van Huyssteen is locating the self within the matrix of material scientific reality, and as constituted by the dynamic processes of evolution.

Appeals to evolutionary science are not the only path to conceiving personhood dynamically. Niels Henrik Gregersen’s proposed “biocultural paradigm,” introduced in the previous chapter, acknowledges both the biological structures of the human body and the societal structures of human culture as forming and developing human personhood.<sup>184</sup> For Gregersen, personhood is “not to be seen as merely a psychological phenomenon, putatively to be biologically explained,” but rather inherently involves cultural and relational dimensions.<sup>185</sup> Though Gregersen admits the importance of human psychology and the neurosciences in understanding personhood, his biocultural approach resists explaining personhood purely biologically:

---

<sup>182</sup> J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, “What Makes Us Human? The Interdisciplinary Challenge to Theological Anthropology and Christology,” *Toronto Journal of Theology* 26,2 (2010):150-1.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid*, 150.

<sup>184</sup> Niels Henrik Gregersen, “Varieties of Personhood: Mapping the Issues,” 6.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

Most authors agree that the human person cannot be exhaustively explained in the terms of the neurosciences, and perhaps cannot be understood at all as physical. They see the human person as co-constituted by a neuronal basis which affords psychological states of awareness, and by its participation in cultural worlds of meaning without which a personal identity could not be developed and maintained.<sup>186</sup>

While Gregersen in this passage rejects constituting personhood by the material body alone, he does not posit additional substances, but rather stays within a scientific worldview to integrate the further dynamisms of person-to-person interaction. Relationality is a key component of recent philosophical conceptions of personhood,<sup>187</sup> and is increasingly being recognized as a key component of the scientific conception of life. Norman Wirzba, for example, argues for seeing the world – and thus human identity – through the lens of “meshwork thinking,” which says that things are their relations:

Bodies have no existence, no life, and no meaning apart from the relations that entangle them in a bewildering array of lines of development. Rather than being self-contained like a circle or blob, trapped within their skins, and then forming relationships, things are more like open-ended lines that continually make contact with and cling to other things similarly undergoing development.<sup>188</sup>

This kind of thinking stands in contrast to “network thinking,” which supposes that things are self-contained entities whose life is interior to them alone, relating to other things optionally and externally.<sup>189</sup> Wirzba argues that network thinking rejects the very relationships that are the precondition for life:<sup>190</sup>

---

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid, 3-4.

<sup>188</sup> Norman Wirzba, “Creation through Christ,” in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, ed. Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018), 48. Wirzba takes this idea of “meshwork thinking” from the anthropologist Tim Ingold, but employs it for theological purposes.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, 50.

Without this interlacing and knotting – made especially visceral every time we eat, breathe, and drink – it would be impossible for anything to live. Life is not a property or power internal to a body. Instead, it is constantly being worked out in a field of relations. In other words, there is no being that is not also a becoming--with-others.<sup>191</sup>

Needless to say, personhood within this kind of thinking is not just influenced by external factors, but rather it is also constituted by them. Wirzba even says that we can conceive of creatures as verbs more than as nouns, stressing their dynamic relationships rather than their distinctions.<sup>192</sup> Seeing one’s personal identity as a verb, rather than a noun, fits with a scientific picture of a mutable, constantly changing material constitution of oneself.

Warren S. Brown and Brad D. Strawn provide arguably the most explicit example of a multifaceted approach to personhood in proposing a view called “Complex Emergent Developmental Linguistic Relational Neurophysiologicalism (CEDLRN).”<sup>193</sup> Brown and Strawn argue that most conceptions of personhood are too simplistic, and bear the marks of an implicit dualism regardless of whether the scholar rejects substance dualism. Instead, they propose their model as a testament to the complex character of personhood and its multiple influences, writing: “From this viewpoint, personhood is constituted by emergent properties which are the product of self-organizing processes within the hypercomplex neurophysiological systems of human beings, and which come about progressively over a long period of developmental, linguistic, and relational history.”<sup>194</sup> While each of the six titular elements provide a different aspect of investigation into the phenomenon of personhood, it could be argued that such a label has lost specificity in the pursuit of being robust – such an approach certainly grounds personhood in many dynamic and changing factors.

---

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, 50-1.

<sup>193</sup> Warren S. Brown and Brad D. Strawn, “Self-Organizing Personhood: Complex Emergent Developmental Linguistic Relational Neurophysiologicalism,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015), 92.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid, 92.

There are issues with these dynamic approaches to personhood. While from a scientific perspective they accord with contemporary research and paradigms, from a theological perspective they raise the question of whether we can meaningfully speak of a consistent person who stands in a relationship with God. Evolutionary and bio-cultural approaches to personhood constitute an identity that is not only changeable – a proposition which is worrying enough to those who desire to hold onto a self-conception of a stable “I” – but also is beholden to the impersonal processes of the material world. This latter difficulty may not pose a problem to some – a fear of determinism undermining personal freedom can either be worked around by appealing to non-deterministic conceptions of science, or determinism can simply be embraced – but if personhood is constituted by material and relational factors, then there is an issue in determining what those factors are, and how they affect one’s personhood.

The substance dualist’s Ship-of-Theseus-style argument also returns here, as bolstering the charge against these multifaceted, dynamic approaches to personhood. It is difficult to emphasize the complexity and contingency of human personhood, and yet also claim a consistent personal identity. Recourse to the human brain as the source of the mind and subjectivity – as so much scholarship has attempted to ground mental properties in neurological structures – is currently being undercut by recent scientific research into the gut-brain axis, in which the gut microbiome is now understood to have a significant impact on a person’s mental states.<sup>195</sup> As such, an individual’s mental well-being – or lack thereof – is constituted by full-body processes, and influenced by numerous environmental factors, many of them foreign to the body<sup>196</sup> – much of the gut microbiome are even separate bacteria that do not share our DNA, and so our own body is increasingly understood to be even more complex and interdependent than previously might have been thought. Multifaceted approaches to personhood, therefore, need to reckon with how to preserve consistent personhood, and more importantly, whether a deficiency in one or more of their identified constitutive factors of personhood can somehow undermine personhood.

---

<sup>195</sup> Lindsay Bruce and Sarah Lane Ritchie, “The Physicalized Mind and the Gut-Brain Axis: Taking Mental Health Out of Our Heads,” *Zygon* 53,2 (2018): 370. One could then question Swinburne further on whether his “thoughts and feelings and purposes,” if shown to have significant origins in the gut microbiome, could truly be said to be proper to an extra-substantial soul.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid*, 357.

To this end, as Gregersen notes, questions of personhood inevitably pose ethical considerations: whether or not someone can be considered a person is bound up in questions of rights, medical decisions, and social duties. Under one distinction highlighted by Gregersen, persons in the “strict sense” are those who individually bear rights and duties, while persons in the “social sense” receive treatment as persons by virtue of being members of society, even if they lack qualities such as “rationality and moral subjectivity.” This means that infants and senile humans do not qualify as persons in the “strict sense.”<sup>197</sup> One can envision the possibility that conceptions of personhood grounded in observable and dynamic factors could be exploited to exclude human individuals who do not meet the defined grounds for personhood, and thus can be treated differently or even have their rights abrogated – a possibility which, from my personal theological perspective, would be horrifying.

Even our own self-understanding as consistent persons is complicated by contemporary psychological research – Léon Turner argues that the idea of “self-multiplicity” is now widespread among psychologists, in which it is difficult to even speak of a singular “I” in one’s own experience. He writes that “there is now widespread agreement that the differences between the ways people behave and experience themselves from moment to moment reflect the actual structural and experiential plurality of self”<sup>198</sup> – which, he notes, challenges the theological idea that people need to experience themselves as continuous persons. If, as Turner argues, human selves are not “distinct autonomous entities” but rather “dispositions toward experiencing oneself in different ways in different contexts,”<sup>199</sup> then the theological desire for consistent personhood comes into conflict with evidence from the human sciences. If one grounds personhood in the dynamic and relational factors of psychosocial sciences, then the options for theologians to address self-multiplicity seem to be either to argue that such “self-fragmentation” is pathological (which Turner argues against),<sup>200</sup> or to abandon the conceptual unity of personhood altogether.<sup>201</sup>

---

<sup>197</sup> Gregersen, “Varieties of Personhood,” 4.

<sup>198</sup> Léon P. Turner, “First Person Plural: Self-Unity and Self-Multiplicity in Theology’s Dialogue with Psychology” *Zygon* 42,1 (2007): 12.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>201</sup> Turner attempts to resolve this tension by arguing for a narrative approach to unity of personhood: understanding oneself through personal narrative accounts for both a plurality of selves and a single personhood (*Ibid.*, 18) – while an insightful approach, this chapter will argue for a different solution below.

While these are all significant concerns, the biggest concern with these multifaceted approaches to personhood for this chapter is that discussion of the biological components of humanity would appeal to the Christological category of human nature, not personhood. This means that approaches to personhood that either draw on theology, engage with theology, or are theologically-informed – such as Gregersen’s “bio-cultural paradigm,” Van Huyssteen’s “embodied self,” and Brown’s and Strawn’s “CEDLRN” – are dealt serious blows. Biological and evolutionary sciences can at best account for the origins and functions of human nature and its outworking – but they cannot constitute personhood, for otherwise Christ would possess a distinct human personhood, an option which traditional Christology has rejected. Psychological sciences, given the above discussion, fall into the same problem: as mentioned in the Meyendorff quote above, self-consciousness cannot be equated with personhood, for Christ had a fully human mind and consciousness of self. Turner’s idea of “self-multiplicity” thus belongs to human nature, as a characteristic shared by all humans; and Turner even notes that there is a distinction between the consciously experienced self and personhood.<sup>202</sup> Even the cultural factors which Gregersen emphasizes as important in fashioning personhood cannot evade this issue – human group characteristics such as culture can also be seen as essentially a part of human nature, as traits which pertain to all humans in an abstract way.<sup>203</sup> Whatever influence they may have on personal identity, cultural factors cannot constitute this personal identity, for otherwise Jesus Christ’s particular cultural milieu and societal upbringing would have to be professed as either shaping a new human person or somehow constituting the eternal personhood of the Word of God – and neither option is acceptable to traditional theology.

As noted before, terminology is an issue here, as the word “person” can be used in many ways across disciplines: as analogous to “human being” as an entity, or as a specific philosophical construct, or in a theological sense as equivalent to *hypostasis* or “subsistence.” These multifaceted approaches to personhood certainly have merits with regards to exploring the many facets of human existence, and can thus offer valuable insights on human nature; however, given

---

<sup>202</sup> Turner, “First Person Plural,” 16.

<sup>203</sup> Nonna Verna Harrison argues that cultural characteristics are part of human nature in Nonna Verna Harrison, “Human Uniqueness and Human Unity,” in *Abba: The Tradition of Orthodox in the West: Festschrift for Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia*, ed. John Behr, Andrew Louth, and Dimitri Conomos (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 208-9.

that “person” is used with a specific meaning in traditional theology, as shown above, this meaning should be considered when bringing theology into interdisciplinary scholarly discourse. And from a Christological perspective, personhood is not constituted by biological factors, so these multifaceted approaches are more appropriate to discussions of human nature, not personhood. If traditional theological categories are going to be used in interdisciplinary discussions, then the implications of this Christological distinction should be heeded. Both of the above strands of arguments – substance dualism and multifaceted approaches – ground personhood in characteristics which Jesus possessed in a fully human way; and yet because such factors did not constitute a separate human person in him, these factors cannot be the grounds of personhood.

### *Difficult Conceptualizations*

The conclusion drawn above is not without some implications that are difficult to conceptualize. As noted, it is difficult to come to terms with the idea that Christ possesses a fully human body, soul, consciousness, and will in addition to his divine characteristics, because these characteristics are so intuitively and frequently associated with personhood. The particular profession of Christ’s fully human consciousness and will may make it seem to some as though Antiochene school theology did win the day and the Word of God and Jesus of Nazareth are just completely parallel persons working together. Since this position has been denied, it is then difficult to reconcile how Christ can still logically be a single person while possessing two wills, two rationalities, two sets of knowledge, and two different experiences of passions and suffering. I suggest that these conceptual problems largely stem from the collapsing of the distinction between personhood and nature that is frequently made (if non-consciously) in the science-theology discourse: tying these characteristics to personhood, and then trying to fit them into a theological grammar that properly understands them as characteristics of human nature, creates problems.

If we take traditional Christology and its professions seriously, however, and uphold this distinction between personhood and human nature, one may justifiably have further conceptual concerns. If personhood is not defined by consciousness, will, experiences, or knowledge, then what is it defined by? In other words, if our bodies, minds, souls, and wills are not constitutive of

our personal identity, then what are we? And correlatively, what exactly are these characteristics, then, if not us? These are reasonable questions, and the decoupling of personhood from characteristics of nature prompts a major shift in the way we understand human constitution. What is needed now is a Christologically-informed understanding of human constitution that starts with personhood and nature as traditionally understood, and then conceptualizes the human being in a way commensurate with those concepts.

### **A Proposal: Humanity Constituted by Natural Energies**

To propose such a Christologically-informed conception of humanity that both preserves the crucial theological distinction between personhood and nature while also being able to engage with contemporary scientific understandings of humanity, I draw on another important term used in patristic theology: energies (Gr. *energeia*). While this metaphysical idea is not identical to the modern scientific concept of energies, the terminological similarity does highlight at least some semblance of a relation between the two concepts – both are concerned with the potentialities, movements, and expressions of things. Energies were understood by patristic theologians as the actualization of a nature in reality, or the outworking and activity of a nature.<sup>204</sup> Discussion of energies can be seen as a way of asserting that natures are intrinsically dynamic realities, not inert abstractions: there is no nature without movement or energy, for it is the energy that effects the nature in existence. A nature without energies would not truly be a nature at all, for it could not take effect in reality and would thus be entirely abstract and non-existent. Meyendorff notes that energy is “the concrete manifestation of nature; and the hypostasis gives it its quality or manner of being.”<sup>205</sup> Thus, when speaking of the relationship between personhood and nature, we can just as easily speak of the relationship between personhood and natural energies. Naturally, traditional Christology professes Christ as having two energies or activities – divine and human.<sup>206</sup>

This can also be difficult to conceptualize, as energy is understood as activities or capabilities; surely this does not make Christ two agents, if his two natures are both active? A helpful analogy

---

<sup>204</sup> Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 28.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid*, 111.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid*, 111.

to understanding how Christ can act with two distinct energies is provided by the Russian Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky:

One must conceive in Christ at once two distinct operations and a single goal, a single act, a single result. Christ acts through these two natures, as a sword reddened in the fire cuts and burns at the same time. Each nature cooperates in the single act according to the manner suitable to it.<sup>207</sup>

Hence, professing two energies in Christ does not destroy the unity of Christ's subject, but rather emphasizes the distinctiveness of his natures as expressed through his two active energies: explaining this idea more directly, Lossky writes, "Each nature acts according to its own properties: the human hand raises the young girl, the divine restores her to life; the human feet walk on the surface of the water, because the divinity has made it firm."<sup>208</sup> In this way, Christ remains a single subject, a single person, but operates in two distinct manners – we thus know his singular personhood both through his human expressions and his divine actions.

Gregory Palamas, a key figure in the Eastern tradition for developing *energeia* theology in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, makes the notion of natural energies central for both knowledge of God and salvation. Palamas drew on the Third Council of Constantinople's profession of Christ's two energies to argue for the importance of uniting our human energies with God's divine energies, enabled by Christ's uniting of both in his person.<sup>209</sup> Palamas thus emphasizes the divinity of the energies of God: God's energies are not derivative or less than his divinity, they are not distinct from him, nor do they constitute another person in the Trinity, but the uncreated divine energies are fully and completely God. As Norman Russell writes, "The whole of God is present in each of his energies."<sup>210</sup> This idea is essential, for Palamas, because it enables a full union of creaturely reality with divinity, through Christ, by participating in these divine energies.<sup>211</sup> Thus

---

<sup>207</sup> Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology An Introduction* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978), 104.

<sup>208</sup> Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., Ltd, 1957), 146.

<sup>209</sup> Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 157-8.

<sup>210</sup> Russell, *Fellow Workers with God*, 133.

<sup>211</sup> Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 158.

humans can know God truly through his activities and manifestations in the world, and themselves become “participants of the divine nature”<sup>212</sup>– while humanity can never become divine itself, or acquire the divine nature for itself, it can participate in the natural energies of divinity, which are equally divine, and thus enable true knowledge of and union with God unto salvation.

It is thus useful to think of natures rather in terms of their energies, as it is by their energies that we know and interact with natures at all. Such a conceptual move opens new possibilities in thinking about both Christ and humanity. Thinking about Christ in this way, his human nature did not constitute his personhood as the divine Logos, but it did effect that identity into the human world through its own energies. Reconceiving human natural characteristics (such as body, soul, consciousness, knowledge, and will) as energies makes them dynamic actions, not static entities, which may be more palatable to understandings of how Christ could possess two seemingly contradictory sets of natural characteristics.<sup>213</sup> God is not extended in space and time, and yet Christ is circumscribed in a body – but there is no logical contradiction between these two statements if being embodied is an energy, an activity, for Christ is then merely effecting his identity in two different ways simultaneously. Christ *is not* two sets of consciousnesses, divine and human, but rather Christ *expresses himself* in two sets of consciousnesses, divine and human.<sup>214</sup> It is as if, similar to Wirzba’s assertion earlier, we should think of natural characteristics more as verbs than nouns: if natures are inherently dynamic, then we must speak of their characteristics in dynamic and active ways.

---

<sup>212</sup> 2 Peter 1:4, NRSV.

<sup>213</sup> Interestingly, in a different work from the ones considered above, Richard Swinburne comes to a similar conclusion about Christ’s fully human mind as professed in the Chalcedonian Definition, arguing that this must be understood as a human way of thinking and acting, a set of properties (Richard Swinburne, “The coherence of the Chalcedonian Definition of the incarnation” in *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, ed. Anna Marmodoro & Jonathan Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 160). However, in arguing this, he still holds onto the idea of a human soul as being a principle of individuation or identity – in other words, constituting personhood (as we saw in his substance dualist work above). As such, he comes to the conclusion that the Chalcedonian Fathers “have to understand other humans having souls in a different sense from Christ having a soul.” (159) Given that this would undermine the soteriological point of the Chalcedonian Definition, I believe it is more valuable to approach this issue through the concept of personhood as hypostasis expressed through natural energies, rather than holding onto the concept of the soul specifically as personhood, as Swinburne does.

<sup>214</sup> I speak of a divine “consciousness” analogically here, as such a thing would be as qualitatively different from human consciousness as non-spatiality is from being circumscribed in a body.

*Yannaras on the Human Body and Soul as Energies*

Christos Yannaras uses this way of thinking about natural energies to discuss humanity.

Yannaras calls energies “those potentials of nature or essence to make known the hypostasis and its existence, to make it known and participable.”<sup>215</sup> His definition further clarifies how energies relate to personhood, as it is a person’s energies – effected through their nature – that reveal to us who they are:

Every man (*sic*) has understanding, reason, will, desire, imagination; every man works, loves, creates. All these capacities, and still others analogous to them, are common to all people...But these natural energies, while they are common to every man, are disclosed and actualized by each man in a unique way, distinct and unrepeatable...The natural energies are the way in which the otherness of each human hypostasis, that is of every human person, is revealed and disclosed.<sup>216</sup>

Yannaras argues that it is only through sharing or *participating* in others’ energies, by forming a relationship, that we can ever know a person – this or that person, while possessing the same natural energies as every other human, expresses those energies in a unique manner that thus reveals their personhood. This even applies to God, as Yannaras follows Palamas in claiming that we know God through his energies. To clarify this, Yannaras further distinguishes between two types of energies: energies proper to one’s nature (e.g. speech and movement for humans), and energies manifested in other natures (e.g. an artwork created by that person).<sup>217</sup> As Yannaras notes, knowledge of a person is possible through both types of energies, though one is more direct and the other more indirect<sup>218</sup> – either way, personhood is communicated and participable through these energies, and in the case of God, creation is a manifestation of God’s energies in other natures.<sup>219</sup> Everything from God to individual humans is known and understood through participating in its energies, according to this logic.

---

<sup>215</sup> Christos Yannaras, *Elements of Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 43.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid*, 43.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid*, 44.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid*, 44-5.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid*, 46. God’s energies that are proper to his nature are what Palamas discusses as the “uncreated energies.” Thus Yannaras can say: “We know the Person of God indirectly by studying the reality of the world...And we come to know the Person of God directly by means of the uncreated Energies.”

What Yannaras argues is that, in addition to the energies listed above, the human body and the human soul – the physical and mental aspects of humanity – should be understood as effected natural human energies.<sup>220</sup> For Yannaras, neither the body nor the soul can be said to *be* the human person, but they both *reveal* who that particular person is in a unique and unrepeatable way such that others can come to know them as well. Yannaras writes: “The distinction between soul and body does not refer to the mode by which humanity is (as nature and person), but to the semantic differentiation of the result of natural energy.”<sup>221</sup> Here, Yannaras begins from the Christological understanding of the constitution of humanity – as nature and person – and explains how discussions of the body and soul fit into this picture as expressions of nature, and thus taking the form of dynamic energies.

### *Implications of Understanding Body and Soul as Energies*

Reframing the body and soul as dynamic energies indicates their constant movement, and how our corporeal and psychological states change and develop.<sup>222</sup> It also, however, allows us to account for their ever-changing nature without worrying about our own loss of personal identity, as the body and soul energies are ultimately manifestations of human nature, and not our personhood. The grounding of personhood, for Yannaras, is “not psychosomatic functions, but ...relationship with God.”<sup>223</sup> It is this critical distinction that also allows Yannaras to emphasize that people with mental disabilities or physical problems are not less human, and are still persons in the image of God, against any related problematic claims about such persons from theology or science.<sup>224</sup> As noted earlier, by grounding personhood in biological and cultural characteristics, one risks making personhood a contingent reality, in which one’s personhood can change with the changes in one’s body or mind. However, in Yannaras’s conception of personhood and energies, the natural changes in body and soul that come from development, illness, genetics, or injury are simply the dynamic natural manifestations of an undefeatable personhood. Psychosomatic functions change constantly, yet the unknowing infant who grows into a mature

---

<sup>220</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>221</sup> Christos Yannaras, *Person and Eros* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007), 48.

<sup>222</sup> Yannaras, *Elements of Faith*, 64.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid, 63-4.

adult and then becomes an elderly human with diminished physical and cognitive faculties is always the same *person* before God.<sup>225</sup> This also accounts for how Yannaras understands existence after death and the preservation of identity in the Resurrection: death cannot rupture the relationship between the person and God, and thus this stable relationship ensures the persistence of one's personhood beyond death and into the eschaton.<sup>226</sup>

Seeing body and soul as dynamic energies is also highly compatible with the contemporary scientific view of the human body and mind as constantly changing, in constant flux with the surrounding environment, and in symbiosis with other organisms and possibly even other consciousnesses. The contemporary scientific view of the human body is that it is not only constantly changing, but it is not even wholly ours, as much of what enables our body to function comes from foreign bacteria. If one places theological weight on the body or physical process as a stable source of personal identity, this could be problematic – but if one views the body as a dynamic energy, an expression of a moving and participating nature, then the scientific view is not only acceptable, but almost compellingly compatible. The “meshwork” of life and the universe, that acknowledges how things are constituted by their relationships, turns out to be both scientifically and Christologically valid. “Self-multiplicity” is also given more room to work within this framework, as Turner's distinction between personhood and the consciously-experienced self can thus be seen to be a distinction between personhood and natural energies. Self-multiplicity, in this understanding, can be seen as the self-conscious effecting of the energies of mind in diverse and multiple ways. Such energies express in manifold forms, but do not constitute, the singular continuous personhood that theologians desire, thus providing, to use Turner's words, a way of “understanding personal continuity that is not tied so tightly to the structural or experiential singularity of self.”<sup>227</sup>

Also in this view, ascribing certain functions to solely the body or solely the mind is not a necessary enterprise, as body and mind work together as energies revealing the human person, thus making scientific research into mind-body interrelations more palatable and less of a “mind-

---

<sup>225</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>227</sup> Turner, “First Person Plural,” 16.

body problem.” As noted earlier, Yannaras sees the mind-body distinction as semantic, not ontological – he writes: “The human glance, the expression of the face, the gesture, the articulated thought, the manifestation of love – are these expressions of the soul or body?”<sup>228</sup> There are no “unmixed manifestations of the body, the soul or the spirit,”<sup>229</sup> for Yannaras – but then, for him, this is not theologically or philosophically problematic. Because the body and soul are not static entities, but dynamic energies, their intermixing and relational character is something to be embraced, not resisted.

To turn to one last implication, Yannaras argues that such a view allows theology to be compatible with evolutionary and psychological sciences, as such disciplines merely describe and account for how humanity’s natural energies are expressed in the world. Yannaras’s argument here is apologetic – he argues that evolutionary and psychological sciences, commonly appealed to as threats to human specialness and theological claims, cannot account for the origins and ultimate reality of human personhood, and thus need not be feared by believers and theologians. It is one’s personhood that defines the image of God in humanity, for Yannaras, identified as each person’s unique relationship with God – science can only ever describe and explain how human natural energies have developed and are expressed in the world.<sup>230</sup> By taking the distinction between personhood and nature seriously as what constitutes human existence, Yannaras effectively sequesters the grounds of personhood from the dynamic expressions of human nature and its interactions with the rest of the world.

In this way, Yannaras’s idea of conceiving body and soul primarily as energies upholds the Christological distinction between personhood and nature, affirms and adds clarity to how natural characteristics are distinct from personhood, and reframes central issues in the science-theology discourse on humanity. That such a conception requires no concessions from traditional theology, and accords remarkably well with scientific research, makes it especially appealing – it offers a “best of both worlds” solution to the need for consistency and dynamism in accounting for human personhood. For Yannaras, personhood remains stable, even while body and soul

---

<sup>228</sup> Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 48.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>230</sup> Yannaras, *Elements of Faith*, 64-5.

naturally change. In this way, energies enable a participation between persons such that knowledge and personality are communicated through relationship, resulting in a very dynamic and relational view of knowledge and being.<sup>231</sup>

This idea is not exclusive to Yannaras: Rowan Williams also argues that scholars misunderstand Christological metaphysics if they see it as concerning primarily “objects,” seen in natures or essences, that must necessarily exclude each other – rather, the relevant theological terms are used to describe agency, the ways in which life is patterned in both limited (finite) and unlimited (divine) modes. Christological metaphysical terms are not a catalogue of distinct subjects, but a diverse set of interrelated, interpenetrating concepts to understand life.<sup>232</sup> This framing of human nature in terms of its energies is thus a Christologically-informed way of conceiving humanity that opens up a wealth of potential engagement between theology and the contemporary scientific picture of humanity.

### **What is Personhood?**

One possible criticism of Yannaras’s ideas, however, is that they characterize personhood in such a way so as to remove it from scientific inquiry altogether. Personhood becomes a purely theological concept, inaccessible to approach from science. This is what Yannaras intends, as he argues that equating biological and psychological characteristics with personal existence exceeds the metaphysical claims of science.<sup>233</sup> But scholars may rightly ask why something that is expressed in reality – as personhood is, albeit through natural energies – cannot be observed, studied, researched, and theorized. Indeed, the idea that energies reveal personhood should offer some bridge between the theological concept and scientific research. Before finishing this chapter, it is important to seek some clarity on what personhood actually is, as a traditional theological concept, and how it is valuable to the science-theology discourse.

---

<sup>231</sup> This substantiates my claim in the Introduction, made against F. LeRon Shults, that the patristic concept of nature is by no means static and anti-relational, but is in fact inherently dynamic and relational – and thus these terms still have relevance to scientific discussions today.

<sup>232</sup> Rowan Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018), 116-7.

<sup>233</sup> Yannaras, *Elements of Faith*, 61-2.

Yannaras's definition of personhood above, as the relationship with God that calls a human into being, is not robust enough to answer this issue. Yannaras claims both personhood's distinction (and thus untouchability) from nature *and* its ability to express itself through and qualify nature. Elsewhere, Yannaras writes that:

Persons and energies are not “parts,” or “constituents,” or “passions,” or “accidents” of the nature, but the nature's *mode of existence*. The personal expression of every energy recapitulates “without parts” and “in the form of unity” the whole natural energy, just as the person recapitulates the whole nature and is the existence of the nature.<sup>234</sup>

This is more helpful in addressing how personhood acts as a sort of organizing and concretizing force for nature, but it does not account for Yannaras's insistence on personhood's untouchability by science. Alexis Torrance, a theologian who specializes in Orthodox approaches to personhood,<sup>235</sup> argues that the Orthodox personalist tradition understands the relationship between personhood and nature as follows:

The person or hypostasis is irreducible to nature, which implies that natural attributes (including those normally associated with the ‘person’, such as rationality and even will) do not somehow combine to form a person. A person likewise does not ‘emerge’ from the combination of such natural properties. Again, the cue is taken from Trinitarian doctrine, in which the divine persons are irreducible to the divine nature: no divine natural attribute defines or distinguishes one person from another (there is one divine will, being, intellect, life), only their mutual hypostatic relations. This line of thinking is variously expressed, but it is sometimes applied to the human person or hypostasis in terms of ‘possessing’ his or her nature. It can be linked to the concept of universal human dignity, wherein

---

<sup>234</sup> Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 58.

<sup>235</sup> Torrance discusses what has been called an Orthodox Personalist movement in 20<sup>th</sup> century theology, in which Eastern Orthodox thinkers make a patristically-sourced idea of personhood of crucial importance in their theological writings, often becoming the lens through which their theological ideas are framed. Yannaras is one of the major thinkers of this movement.

the lack of one or other natural human property (including, for instance, a diminished rational faculty) cannot translate into a denial of that human being's personhood, since the human person, while always connected to human nature and forever expressed through that nature, nonetheless remains intrinsically irreducible to human nature (with its properties or capacities) as someone inviolably and infinitely precious.<sup>236</sup>

Torrance's explanation is notably apophatic in character, as it offers several explanations for what a person is not – a combination of natural characteristics, an emergent property of nature, or reducible to natural explanations – though this is still useful for preventing misconceptions. Torrance also affirms the uniqueness of personhood, its preciousness, and its undeniability. This explanation upholds Yannaras's conception of human constitution, but it still leaves much ambiguity in defining personhood, as Torrance acknowledges by writing that theologians' explanations are "variously expressed."

Part of the issue here may be that personhood is a somewhat inherently mysterious concept in traditional theology. David Bentley Hart, while writing on the Chalcedonian Definition and its distinction between personhood and nature, argues that a key element of personhood is its irreducibility to natural characteristics. Let us look again at this key quote from Hart, with the current chapter's concerns in mind:

The rather extraordinary inference to be drawn from this doctrine is that personality is somehow transcendent of nature. A person is not merely a fragment of some larger cosmic or spiritual category, a more perfect or more defective expression of some abstract set of attributes, in light of which his or her value, significance, legitimacy, or proper place is to be judged. This man or that woman is not merely a specimen of the general set of the human; rather, his or her human nature is only one manifestation and one part of what he or she is or might be. And personality is an irreducible mystery, somehow prior to and more spacious

---

<sup>236</sup> Alexis Torrance, *Human Perfection in Byzantine Theology: Attaining the Fullness of Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 14.

than everything that would limit or define it, capable of exceeding even its own nature in order to embrace another, ever more glorious nature.<sup>237</sup>

Hart's explanation reveals some dimensions to personhood that explain why it may be a difficult concept to approach scientifically. For one thing, a person is definitionally unique, and what constitutes a person is definitionally what is unique about them – which, we might note, makes personhood largely unaccountable to science, as scientific disciplines tend to investigate regularities and patterns. Likewise, if personhood is irreducible to and transcendent of natural characteristics, then the best science can do is approach how personhood is expressed in natural energies – it cannot approach personhood itself. Finally, Hart notes that personhood is a concept with open possibilities: this is seen in Christ, who while properly a person with a divine nature, is able assume a human nature as well. And, as Hart alludes to at the end of the above passage, it is seen in humans in deification, in which human beings gain eternal life through becoming “partakers of the divine nature.”<sup>238</sup> In this way, personhood is able to bridge multiple natures at once, even if those natures are of such difference as those of humanity and divinity. Such a concept will resist being too easily definable.

Rowan Williams offers a differently worded, though conceptually similar, take on this issue by saying that personhood is not “a transcendent ‘portion’ of the human constitution; the person is not an extra bit of nature but is how we understand and speak of the way in which exemplars of human nature construct an identity that is thought, spoken and more or less consciously nurtured.”<sup>239</sup> Williams's definition reiterates that personhood is not a “thing” to be added to nature, or a substance in its own right, but rather is an organizing principle. In a manner similar to Yannaras's account of participable knowledge, Williams claims that while we cannot *observe* personhood, personhood is *disclosed* through relations.<sup>240</sup> And the foremost relationship that constitutes personhood is that of the person with God:

---

<sup>237</sup> David Bentley Hart, *Atheist Delusions*, 211.

<sup>238</sup> 2 Peter 1:4.

<sup>239</sup> Rowan Williams, *Looking East in Winter* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2021), 121.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid*, 125-6.

A Christologically shaped anthropology is thus one that foregrounds the mystery of the ‘personal’, not as a mystique of fathomless and arbitrary liberty or a sentimentalism about the oddities of human psychology, but as a recognition of the centrality of freely responsive action in any account of the human – action that, in responding to the call or invitation of its divine source, acquires an identity that can be declared or exposed in relation to other created beings.<sup>241</sup>

Williams’s account thus also distinguishes personhood from psychological characteristics (which pertain to human nature) and suggests that personhood’s relational origins actually allow it to bridge the divine and the human worlds, in that personhood is sourced in divinity and disclosed within creation among other humans.

In examining these scholars’ views on a Christologically-informed conception of personhood, we find that it is a difficult concept to define, and possibly is inherently so – personhood is not a thing that is identifiable by empirical or objective observations, but rather through relational knowledge. Nevertheless, these thinkers’ comments reveal an essential way in which personhood is important for theology’s engagement with science. While personhood is individually unrepeatable, and thus not abstractable in the way scientific theorizing might prefer, it still expresses itself through natural energies and makes itself known through its relations. These relations include both God and other finite creatures, such that personhood is known and understood both in reference to created beings (and thus within the dynamism of the scientific order) and in reference to God. Thus, as mentioned above, personhood can be seen as a bridge between divinity and humanity, and therefore it can potentially bridge between theological and scientific investigations of humanity. Williams effectively asserts this when he writes:

There exists in creation the possibility of relation between finite and infinite at a level other than that of universal causal activation. Personal relatedness between divine and human will unite divine life with the highest of the levels of finite agency; and this relation transformingly illuminates how human intelligence and love are rooted in infinite agency... Thus the world of interlocking finite causes is

---

<sup>241</sup> Ibid, 127.

not closed in a mechanistic way: finite agencies may bring about effects greater than the sum of their parts through their relatedness to infinite act.<sup>242</sup>

This quote asserts that personhood effectively acts as a different sort of causal relationship than one of mechanistic causation, meaning that through personhood divine agency can act in the created order without abrogating or replacing created agency. I will explore this idea from Williams further in the next chapter when I argue that Christology can illuminate the God-world relationship; presently, this passage provides us with a way of understanding how personhood is the means through which finite creation is related to infinite divinity. Human personhood naturally expresses itself in finite energies, and yet what is being expressed is an identity that is constituted by a relationship with God. It thus provides a point of engagement between God and the world, and thus also between the relationships humans have with God and with the rest of creation. This brings us closer towards understanding how our personhood relates to our human natural energies, which disclose our personhood to the rest of the world, and are thus in turn observed and analyzed by science.

## **Conclusion**

In Chapter 1, I argued that making Christology a starting point for studying humanity could reframe several conversations in the science-theology discourse. This chapter has taken that argument one step further by making Chalcedonian Christology axiomatic in considering the issue of human constitution and personhood. This chapter thus articulates a Christologically-informed anthropology. Exploring the distinction between personhood and human nature reveals the nuanced ways in which traditional Chalcedonian theology understands both Christ and humanity. Much of the current theological engagement with science does not account for the difference between personhood and human nature that stems from Chalcedonian Christology, and as such there is confusion about terms and the grounding of human personhood. I believe that beginning interdisciplinary discourse with an understanding of this Christological distinction and its implications could lead to interesting new developments in the science-theology discussion on human personhood, and I have proposed one such idea towards that end with an examination of Yannaras's use of the concept of natural energies. Ultimately, this proposal of

---

<sup>242</sup> Rowan Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation*, 2-3.

seeing humanity as dynamic and participable natural energies that express unique personhoods is one that accounts for traditional theology's Christological distinction between personhood and nature, and offers some new and interesting paths for engagement with science, even if closing others.

Traditional theology actually presents a rather dynamic picture of human nature – the patristic concept of energies helps clarify this understanding for both Christology and anthropology, and even yields an interesting solution to the mind-body problem, in seeing both mind and body as dynamic and intermixing energies. Personhood, seen in this light, is both the grounds of an individual identity and the connection between creation and God, the finite and the infinite. By emphasizing these relational and dynamic understandings of patristic terms, I not only desire to enable the science-theology discourse to find fresh points of engagement with contemporary scientific research, but also to enable traditional theology to be more coherent in such conversations. As mentioned above, Rowan Williams argues that traditional theological language is misunderstood if it is thought to be about objects – whether natures, or essences, or other substantial entities – but rather must be understood to be about the diverse ways theology understands agency, both divine and human, and how such agency is effected.<sup>243</sup> This chapter aims to recapture such a traditional theological perspective for the science-theology discourse, and to show how taking a Chalcedonian Christological perspective on humanity can actually address many of the issues with other scholarly approaches to human constitution and personhood, all while being both faithful to traditional theology and open to the claims of contemporary science. This conception of humanity is relational, dynamic, and participatory, all of which are characteristics that will be essential for the investigation of humanity in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

---

<sup>243</sup> Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation*, 116.

## PART 2: CHRIST AS METHOD

In the next two chapters, I turn from examining how traditional Chalcedonian Christology reframes our understanding of what it means to be human for the science-theology discourse, to exploring how Chalcedonian Christology can be used constructively in further engagements between science and theology. To do so in more than a series of *ad hoc* ways requires one to articulate a method, defined by traditional Chalcedonian Christology, that can be used to relate scientific and theological claims about humanity. The next two chapters offer two steps to constructing such a method. First, in Chapter 3, I examine how Christology informs the God-world relationship – and thus the God-human relationship – and draw out Christological principles for understanding God and the world relate to one another. These principles, I will argue, are unity in personhood, differentiation in nature, and an ultimate asymmetry between God and creation, as expressed in Chalcedonian Christology. Then, in Chapter 4, I use these same principles to articulate a method of asymmetrical participation between theology and psychology, as disciplines which study God and humanity respectively, that is informed by Chalcedonian Christology and can be used to further explore the relationship between theological and psychological claims. In doing so, I show how traditional Chalcedonian Christology can be used a methodology for science-theology discussions, and thus set the stage for Part 3 of this thesis, in which I apply this Christological method to two engagements of theology and psychology.

## Chapter 3: Christology and the God-World Relationship

### Introduction

If Jesus Christ is rarely brought up in science-theology discussions surrounding humanity, he is more frequently appealed to in discussions surrounding the God-world relationship. Such discussions are highly relevant to this project, as humans are part of the world, and scientific and theological claims about humanity are often inextricable from those about the wider universe. The scientific understanding of humanity, especially, is grounded in a continuity between humanity and all other physical, biological, and finite realities – as such, it is important to situate discussion of the God-human relationship within discussion of the wider God-world relationship. It is also essential to review how scholars in the science-theology discourse do engage with Christology: Christ's status as the eternal Logos, as well as his revelation of divinity and relationship to God the Father, give scholars inspiration for making claims about how God relates to the universe.

Such appeals to Christology are many and varied, so for the purposes of this chapter, I will analyze three edited volumes that specifically engage Christology with the science-theology discourse: *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science* edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall; *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology* edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen; and *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* edited by John Polkinghorne. These three volumes are each organized around a key Christological concept for understanding the God-world relationship – creation, incarnation, and kenosis respectively – and each provide a useful array of perspectives from many of the leading scholars in the field. While space will not allow a full treatment of every essay across the three volumes, I will engage with a sample of essays in each volume that are representative of either the volume's overall aim or a significant recurring subtheme.

In this chapter, I will contend that each volume shows how scholarly reflection on creation, incarnation, and kenosis have contributed important questions and key insights for applying Christology to the God-world relationship; yet each volume also leaves room for further development and clarification of the discourse, specifically in revealing a key debate point

among the scholarly perspectives within each volume. These debates include the difference between seeing Christ as present or absent in creation, the distinction between divine immanence and Incarnation, and the definition of kenosis. In analyzing the ideas and debates inherent in these volumes, critically responding to them, and then bringing them into conversation with Rowan Williams's recent exposition of traditional Christological metaphysics in *Christ the Heart of Creation*, I will show that appeals to traditional Christology, and specifically patristic Christology, yield a clearer and more coherent picture of the God-world relationship that both preserves the coherence of Christian theology and still enables space to engage with science without diminishing science's claims. More specifically, I will argue that the principles of the Chalcedonian Definition that define the relationship between humanity and divinity in Christ also define the God-world relationship, and I will demonstrate this by drawing out the operative principles from the discussions of the edited volumes and Williams's work. This chapter is thus the first step towards constructing a method grounded in Chalcedonian Christology for tackling and reconciling various engagements of theological and scientific claims.

### ***Christ and the Created Order – Analysis and Response***

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.<sup>244</sup>*

Torrance and McCall reference the above Colossians passage in the introduction to *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science* as a way of attesting to the fundamentality of Christology to any theology of creation. In Christ, they argue, we are given to know how God relates to the created order and what that order is; the natural world may appear independent from God, but it is wholly dependent upon and bound up with Christ.<sup>245</sup> To bracket out Christ from discussions of the God-world relationship would be to “put on blinders... deliberately choosing to obscure our vision of what this universe is created to be.”<sup>246</sup>

---

<sup>244</sup> Col 1:15-17, NKJV.

<sup>245</sup> Torrance and McCall, “Introduction: Christ and the Created Order,” 17-18.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

Such an approach necessitates making Christ the starting point for discussions of creation, which may reframe those discussions significantly. Also reflecting on the Colossians passage, N.T. Wright laments that many conversations surrounding creation and such scriptural passages begin with a preconceived affirmation and explanation of the one God creating everything, and then later try to fit Jesus into the picture, without much alteration of the pre-established picture. But, Wright argues, these very scriptures actually argue the opposite direction epistemologically, starting with Jesus as the one who reveals who God is and how he is Creator:<sup>247</sup>

The more we discover about Jesus himself the more we find out, not simply about God in the abstract but about *the means of creation itself*, and that when we explore this line of thought, all sorts of things look differently to how they look when we come at things the other way around.<sup>248</sup>

In other words, Christology is an essential starting point for discussing creation, which, as the authors in this volume argue, has important ramifications for engaging with science. The essays in this volume grapple with the applicability of the claim that Christ reveals how God relates to the created order. I will examine three themes arising from this grappling that are espoused in these essays: first, essays which start with Christ's status as the divine Logos and what that implies for creation and science; second, essays which make the cross of Christ primary for understanding creation, and how a cross-based perspective changes how one views the relationship between science and God; and third, essays which position science and theology as two valid but distinct perspectives on creation that are held together by Christ. I will respond to these themes by drawing out the tensions and difficulties that arise between them, and propose a way of addressing these tensions by presenting Alexei Nesteruk's emphasis on Christ's single personhood as holding together the disparate natures of God and creation.

---

<sup>247</sup> N.T. Wright, "Christ and the Cosmos: Kingdom and Creation in Gospel Perspective," in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, ed. Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018), 99.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 100 (emphasis his).

### *Christ as Logic of Creation*

The claim that Christ is the divine Logos is an attractive starting point for theologians looking to engage with science. Murray Rae begins his essay by noting that Christ is the “very logic of creation, the one who reveals the end and purpose to which all things are directed.”<sup>249</sup> What this means, for Rae, is that nothing in creation can be understood entirely until its role in God’s purposes, effected through Christ, is considered.<sup>250</sup> Rae uses an extended analogy considering the music of Chopin as a phenomenon that can be understood at many different levels – acoustics of the space, physiology of the performer’s hands, musicology of the construction – but all are incomplete explanations of the phenomenon without considering Chopin’s intention and the passion that he put into the music. Such consideration of intention puts all those other levels of explanation into new light, and Rae argues the same holds for scientific explanations in light of the universe’s *telos* in Christ<sup>251</sup> – “in the light of Christ we are bound to consider the ends to which all human endeavors are directed.”<sup>252</sup> Christ, as the fundamental logic and order of creation, is the foundation of all disciplines, including science, which each operate at their own level of explanation yet derive their truth from Christ’s purposes.<sup>253</sup>

Norman Wirzba takes a different approach, but with similar conclusions, by appealing to Maximus the Confessor’s idea of the *logoi* in creation: the principles of order that define unique creatures, that are all related to the eternal Logos that is Christ. Wirzba writes: “Because creatures come to be and become through Christ the Creator, he is also always personally present to each creature as its life-giving power.”<sup>254</sup> This relationship between Christ and each thing in creation allows Wirzba to argue for his “meshwork” understanding of creation, meaning that things are their relations.<sup>255</sup> For Wirzba, the idea that creatures have *logoi* that relate them to Christ and to each other yields a theological portrait of creation that is consistent with the portrait of modern science, as life and the world all exist in “participation in the currents of movement

---

<sup>249</sup> Murray Rae, “Jesus Christ, the Order of Creation,” in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, ed. Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018), 23.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-9.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>254</sup> Norman Wirzba, “Creation *through* Christ,” 40.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-8.

that continually interweave members with one another.”<sup>256</sup> As Wirzba notes, Paul’s use of an organic metaphor of a living body to speak of the church testifies to this kind of dynamic, interwoven picture of reality, and how all are related in Christ.<sup>257</sup>

Thus, where Rae sees Christ as providing the *telos* of several distinct explanations of reality, Wirzba sees Christ as constituting the organic unity that characterizes life and the world. Both scholars directly connect Christ’s status as Logos with a logical and ordered creation, and argue for understanding it better in his light.

### *A Cruciform Approach to Creation*

A different approach is taken by N.T. Wright in his essay, where instead of thinking about Christ relating to logic and order, he begins with the moment in the Gospels where he claims Christ is enthroned – the cross.<sup>258</sup> For Wright, if one is to talk about Christ’s power and creation, then one should start with what the scriptures say Christ actually taught about power and creation. Wright gathers evidence both from Christ’s redefinition of power – the cross, washing his disciples’ feet, God’s power being made perfect in weakness<sup>259</sup> – and from his parables of the kingdom of heaven (as Wright notes, as the new creation is the renewal of creation itself, how Christ speaks of the kingdom may have bearing on how we speak of creation in general).<sup>260</sup> From this evidence, Wright essentially makes an argument for an evolutionary picture of life and the universe:

But various scientists, not least the Darwin family...none the less came up with a picture of “origins” that looks remarkably like Jesus’s parables of the kingdom. Some seeds go to waste; others bear remarkable fruit. Some projects start tiny and take forever but suddenly produce a great crop. Some false starts are wonderfully rescued; others are forgotten. Chaos is astonishingly overcome. This says nothing about generosity since that word only makes sense in terms of a personal

---

<sup>256</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid, 52-3.

<sup>258</sup> Wright, “Christ and the Cosmos,” 101.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid, 102.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid, 100.

creator...But the evolutionists have been driven again and again to speak of the prodigality of the natural world. And the theologians can pick that up and say, “Yes, this is precisely what you might expect if there is a God of boundless, generous love behind it all. The prodigal father. The God we know in and as Jesus the Messiah.”<sup>261</sup>

Wright’s argument is that we cannot think of Christ as relating to creation like a despot in complete command, but must think more deeply about the Christ as portrayed in the scriptures, and this does not always align with what we may think of as a logical and ruled creation.

Wilson Poon takes this line of thinking even further in his essay, in which he rebuts the common line taken by natural theology in which “scientific discoveries evidence a ‘monarchical god’ whose grandeur, majesty, and wisdom are as conceived by the world and not as displayed by Christ on the cross.”<sup>262</sup> Poon argues that the glory of God must be understood through the Gospel of John’s characterization of the crucifixion as Christ’s glory – and that means that the world declares the glory of God by acting as if God does not exist, or is hidden. For Poon, God, in his kenotic love, grants creaturely autonomy to such an extent that the world can be sufficiently explained without recourse to God.<sup>263</sup> In this way, Poon argues that scientific methodological naturalism actually witnesses to Christ,<sup>264</sup> and that scientists thus learn “strength-in-weakness” through their own taking up of their crosses, which is learning to find companionship with the crucified Christ as “presence in absence.”<sup>265</sup>

Poon’s inversion of common natural theological arguments is thus much stricter than Wright’s – whereas Wright invites the believer to see the Christ as revealed by the scriptures in the processes of the natural world, for Poon Christ cannot be found in such examinations at all, as he is the *deus absconditus* (hidden god), kenotically allowing his world to stand completely autonomously without pointing towards him at all. Both scholars are clearly arguing for the

---

<sup>261</sup> Ibid, 103.

<sup>262</sup> Wilson Poon, “Science as the Foolishness of God: Twenty-Eight Theses and *Scholia* on ‘Science and Religion,’” 256.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid, 257.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid, 271.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid, 258.

integrity of the contemporary scientific picture of reality (and of the integrity of scientific disciplines) while appealing to scripturally-backed theological reasoning. There are tensions, however, between this line of Christological reflection and that taken by Rae and Wirzba, as the latter professes a world that is only understood in Christ, whereas the former (more so in Poon's case, less so in Wright's) argues for a world that is understood independently of Christ. Before attempting to resolve the tensions between these "logical" and "cruciform" approaches, let us examine a third theme in the volume, that of how Christ reveals the relationship between science and theology as disciplines.

*Christological insights for relating Theology and Science*

Brian Curry offers an intriguing way of relating theology and science by characterizing science as a "power," akin to the ones that Paul says Christ disarmed through the cross.<sup>266</sup> He explains:

This is not first of all a criticism; recall that the powers are created by and for Christ. They are basically and originally good, and we need them in order to live. However, as Hart has argued, the glory of scientific practice is in its humility...we sense the rebellious power of modern science, to give just one example, in the ease with which this self-limitation becomes itself a cosmology and metaphysics.<sup>267</sup>

For Curry, Christ thus triumphs over any totalizing claims of science and returns it to its proper humility as an epistemically limited method of analyzing the world.<sup>268</sup> This rather confrontational language actually is meant to defend the integrity of science, but in this instance not from theological engagement but from itself. Curry calls science one of humanity's greatest achievements, but that it can only continue to be so when it is "freed from the burden of either providing us with a metaphysics or of saving us – these Christ has done."<sup>269</sup> Curry's

---

<sup>266</sup> Brian Curry, "Christ, Creation, and the Powers: Elements in a Christian Doctrine of Creation," in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, ed. Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018), 92.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid*, 93.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid*, 95.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid*, 95.

Christological approach thus characterizes science as a discipline that is not opposed to theology, but rather finds its own place in its proper humility returned to it by Christ.

J.B. Stump and James K.A. Smith both take a more conciliatory approach to relating science and theology through Christ, in which science acts not as a separate power needing to be kept in check, but rather as something which is revealed in Christ's very being. Both scholars in their respective essays appeal to the Chalcedonian understanding of Christ's two natures to approach how theology and science can be held together. For Stump, the ability to see Christ as fully human, and yet also as fully divine, requires a "cognitive dualism" in which we affirm the need for multiple perspectives to make sense of the world. Stump thus asserts that viewing science and theology as complementary, rather than contradictory, is precisely in line with what orthodox Christology suggests about reality.<sup>270</sup>

Additionally, James K.A. Smith argues that the Chalcedonian Definition reveals how the church's theological imagination enabled it to articulate core Christological beliefs while taking seriously the "science" of its day.<sup>271</sup> He writes:

"Look, based on our current philosophical knowledge, it's impossible to affirm that someone is both human and divine. So you have to resolve this tension in one direction or the other: either Jesus is human or he is divine. But he can't be both." But of course that is just the approach that Chalcedon refused.<sup>272</sup>

Smith sees a similar imagination necessary to reconcile scientific and theological perspectives today. His suggestion is to reemphasize that science and theology can be best understood as practices, not just sets of claims: if we want to truly know creation, we must not only practice science, but also practice the life of the church. Such practices, Smith argues, will yield an

---

<sup>270</sup> J.B. Stump, "Explaining the Created Order: Scientific and Personal Images," in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, ed. Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018), 226.

<sup>271</sup> James K.A. Smith, "Our Chalcedonian Moment: Christological Imagination for Scientific Challenges," in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, ed. Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018), 182-3.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid*, 183.

epistemological outlook that is more attuned to creation, with all of its apparent contradictions and challenges.<sup>273</sup>

Curry, Stump, and Smith have attempted to use Christological insights as ways of understanding how theology and science can both approach the truth of creation. Similarly to Rae, they center upon a “different valid perspectives” approach that attempts to preserve the explanatory power of science while not allowing such power to exclude that of theology. All three argue that by looking to Christ, we receive insight into how we are to understand the world. Intriguingly, Smith’s and Stump’s invocation of the Chalcedonian Definition draws attention to the idea that science and theology can be seen analogously to the human and divine in Christ. However, neither is able to articulate what unites science and theology in this understanding – invoking Chalcedon enables them to affirm science and theology as distinct disciplines with distinct claims while attesting to some more nebulous underlying unity. While this approach draws attention to the applicability of the Chalcedonian Definition as modeling the God-world relationship, it does not resolve the tension between scholars who see Christ as holding together the created order, and those who see Christ as absent from the created order.

*Response: Christ both Revealed and Hidden?*

The scholars in *Christ and the Created Order* have hit upon a challenging issue: to what extent does creation reveal Christ, and to what extent does understanding Christ help us understand creation? Wilson Poon’s essay is particularly challenging in this regard, as it brings together the scientific convictions of methodological naturalism and its resultant frame of explainable reality, and the theological justification of the *deus absconditus*, the God who hides himself, his glory found in the humiliation of the cross. Poon’s ideas thus seem to do justice to both the claims and experience of scientists, while still enlisting a strong theological foundation. But the idea of a created order explainable without any recourse to the work of God also seems to contradict the convictions of Rae and Wirzba, who reflect the introductory remarks of the editors in claiming that Christ is essential for understanding creation.

---

<sup>273</sup> Ibid, 191-3.

Stump and Smith both provide ways of understanding science and theology as two distinct ways of looking at reality, which in principle would preserve the integrity of science that Poon's approach advocates – one in which a “god hypothesis” for understanding anything in the universe scientifically is not needed.<sup>274</sup> Smith's argument for reemphasizing the notion that science and theology are both inherently practices, not just sets of claims, is one way of approaching this tension between Poon's approach and the “Christ as logic of creation” approaches: different practices yield different types of knowledge and claims, and thus while scientific methodological naturalism will not reveal God, theological practices in the church will. Poon does argue for the church's Eucharistic worship as the place where God can be experienced, and not by rational arguments or concepts but by humbly and sacramentally sharing in his body – Poon says scientists do not need a “god hypothesis,” but if they “come and see,” they will come to know Christ's companionship with them through the Eucharist.<sup>275</sup>

In this sense, Christ is present through the experiential reality of the church, but he is absent in the scientific understanding of the universe, either as a cause or as evidenced-support reality. However, this emphasis on encounter with Christ in the universe does reveal the personal dimensions that knowledge of God takes – and it is personhood that can help resolve this tension between Christ's presence and absence in creation. Alexei Nesteruk argues that any characterization of the God-world relationship needs to appeal to the single personhood of Jesus Christ:

The presence of God in the world (usually asserted in patristics either in terms of the divine *uncreated energies* or the *logoi* of created things) cannot be understood without the personal mystery of Christ as a locus of the divine and human.<sup>276</sup>

For Nesteruk, what is key about both of these concepts of *logoi* and energies (with which we engaged extensively in the last chapter) is their relationship to personhood: energies are

---

<sup>274</sup> Poon, “Science as the Foolishness of God,” 258.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid, 257-8.

<sup>276</sup> Nesteruk, “The Universe as Hypostatic Inherence in the Logos of God: Panentheism in the Eastern Orthodox Perspective,” in *In Whom we Live and Move and Have our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's presence in a Scientific World*, ed. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 170.

expressions of personhood, while *logoi* are held together in the person of the Logos. Nesteruk continues:

The natural existence of the world is existence in the personhood of God, i.e., in his hypostasis; this means that the whole creation is brought to unity in the hypostasis of the Logos and that the link between God and the world is nonnatural (i.e., nonontological, nonphysical, nonbiological, etc.) but *hypostatic*, which can be expressed as the relationship between the Divine and the world in the personhood of God.<sup>277</sup>

This idea helps reconcile how this volume can understand the created order as inextricably bound up with Christ, with how Poon can argue that Christ is absent from the universe understood by science and yet met in the Eucharist. Christ is *personally* bound up with creation; the *logoi* inherent in all created things are held together in his person as the Logos, not the divine nature as such. However, personal knowledge is not the same as natural knowledge – as explored in the last chapter, personhood is not a constituent of human nature, but is rather a distinct concept. Thus, it is not a concept analyzable by science, and especially not by the scientific method – personhood is unrepeatable, unique, and transcendent of human nature.<sup>278</sup> If the Word is hidden from the universe of science, it is because he is not acting as a natural cause among other causes – divine nature and created nature are distinct – but he is still personally ever-present in all things, giving them their order and logic. This also explains why Poon insists on the importance of the Eucharist – in the Eucharist, the person of Christ is known and encountered directly. As such, Poon can say “it is only in the context of the church, the sacramental body of Christ on earth, that a God-ordained scientific enterprise flourishing without the ‘god hypothesis’ can possibly make sense.”<sup>279</sup> No ‘god hypothesis’ is needed as a natural cause to make scientific explanations work, but the personal presence of Christ still pervades the universe, and is thus made evident to scientists through their participation in the Eucharist – hence, Poon’s invitation to “come and see.”<sup>280</sup>

---

<sup>277</sup> Ibid, 171.

<sup>278</sup> David Bentley Hart, *Atheist Delusions*, 211.

<sup>279</sup> Poon, “Science as the Foolishness of God,” 257-8.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid, 257-8.

There is thus a Chalcedonian logic to this reconciliation of “Christ as logic of creation” approaches and Poon’s hidden God approach – the nature of creation is held in distinction from the nature of divinity, its own causes and methods independent, but the two natures are held together personally in Christ. This idea fulfills Stump’s argument for an inherent dualism in reality, and Smith’s call for a “Chalcedonian Imagination” – it is an idea that takes seriously the science of the day, without compromising its claims or methods by introducing intrinsic reliance on theology, and yet it accounts for the theological conviction that there is a relationship between God and creation, and it is found in the personhood of Christ. The next volume I discuss, *Incarnation*, further explores this relationship between Christ and creation.

### ***Incarnation – Analysis and Response***

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us*<sup>281</sup>

The scholars writing for *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology* ponder what it means for the Word of God to have become flesh, and more specifically how the idea of incarnation relates to more than just human persons. As Niels Henrik Gregersen explains in the introduction, the essays address just how far incarnation as a concept can apply, and whether it can characterize the God-world relationship at-large.<sup>282</sup> Gregersen thus highlights “deep incarnation,” the idea that human existence is inextricably linked to the biological conditions and physical processes that humanity shares with the rest of creation – and thus, the redemptive implications of the claim that “the Word became flesh” extend far beyond humanity to the entire world.<sup>283</sup>

Several authors in this volume follow Gregersen and argue for a view of the Incarnation that encompasses the natural world as well as humanity. Other authors, however, resist such a wide application of the concept of incarnation, believing that its scope is far more limited than can be

---

<sup>281</sup> John 1:14, NRSV.

<sup>282</sup> Niels Henrik Gregersen, “Introduction,” in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 1-2.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

applied to the world at-large. In presenting both sets of authors and the sides they take, I will also analyze a third set of authors who appeal to patristic ideas on Christology, and will suggest that their recourse to patristic views on incarnation can help arbitrate this debate about the applicability of incarnation to understanding the God-world relationship.

### *Deep Incarnation*

Gregersen identifies three dimensions of deep incarnation: materiality, sociality, and suffering.<sup>284</sup> “Materiality” means that Christ has assumed the full biological and physical conditions of the universe, and thus his incarnation somehow assumes and redeems all materiality in creation. “Sociality” means that Christ also assumed relationships, between himself, other humans, and other beings, and thus these relationships are also included in the saving power of the incarnation. “Suffering” means that the body of Christ cannot be a perfectionist picture of humanity that is not subjected to desires, temptations, and horrors – rather, Christ assumes all biological and spiritual drives that make us human.<sup>285</sup> In identifying these dimensions, Gregersen is insisting that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” must necessarily have further-reaching implications than the redemption of individual human persons.

Robert John Russell supports this idea of deep incarnation, and argues that, in patristic writings, it was recognized that whatever is assumed by Christ is redeemed by Christ – and thus everything that constitutes the conditions of Christ’s humanity, from his biological workings to all of the laws of physics, must be redeemed.<sup>286</sup> Russell also appeals to the idea of *communicatio idiomatum*, or exchange of attributes, to argue that Christ’s divine attributes must be given to his humanity, and thus by extension to all life on earth and to the physical universe. As such, he argues, the incarnate God is present in and to all of life.<sup>287</sup>

Celia Deane-Drummond takes a different approach, and argues for an understanding of deep incarnation as a “drama” centered around the cross. In this way, what Christ has acted in his

---

<sup>284</sup> Niels Henrik Gregersen, “The Extended Body of Christ: Three Dimensions of Deep Incarnation,” in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 227.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid, 245-6.

<sup>286</sup> Robert John Russell, “Jesus: the Way of all Flesh and the Proleptic Feather of Time,” in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 340.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid, 340.

passion reveals a pattern of service and self-offering which humans have a responsibility to follow. Such a responsibility does extend beyond humanity to the natural world and all other creatures, which is why Deane-Drummond calls deep incarnation an “ecothology.”<sup>288</sup>

The intense problems within human communities and the injustices therein are sometimes viewed as being in tension with responsibility toward the earth; deep incarnation resists this false choice of acting in favor of either people or planet.<sup>289</sup>

There is undoubtedly an eco-theological color to the idea of deep incarnation, which Deane-Drummond highlights. She argues that the world is a shared drama between humanity and other creatures, and humans have an ethical demand to take part, following Christ’s example in his passion. Gregersen, Russell, and Deane-Drummond therefore all make incarnation a linchpin in articulating a worldview in which humans are ethically and soteriologically connected with the rest of creation.

### *Immanence, not Incarnation*

However, other authors in the volume question whether incarnation is the right concept for discussing non-human creation, or the God-world relationship at all. Holmes Rolston III is among the most vehement of critics of deep incarnation, claiming that to move from a claim about a particular – Jesus’ body – to the global whole – Earth and all creation – is slippage.<sup>290</sup> He questions what a redeemed cosmos would look like (such as a redeemed quark) and argues that the way deep incarnation advocates like Gregersen use the word “flesh” is so stretched out as to lose its particular significance and its intended scriptural meaning, which Rolston argues is to point out God’s solidarity with human suffering (he scoffs at the idea that John would be “interested in Jesus’ solidarity with grass or asteroids”).<sup>291</sup> In particular, Rolston questions Gregersen’s distinction that the incarnation reveals God to be “omnipresent,” but not “omni-

---

<sup>288</sup> Celia Deane-Drummond, “The Wisdom of Fools? A Theo-Dramatic Interpretation of Deep Incarnation,” in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 199.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid*, 199.

<sup>290</sup> Holmes Rolston III, “Divine Presence – Causal, Cybernetic, Caring, Cruciform: From Information to Incarnation,” in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 262.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid*, 264

manifest” in certain aspects of creation (such as inanimate processes or acts of evil). For Rolston, this means that God is incarnate in things that reveal nothing about him, and thus it is hard to understand how this claim yields any specifics on how God redeems non-human creation.<sup>292</sup>

Christopher Southgate likewise feels that incarnation only applies meaningfully to Jesus Christ. For Southgate, claiming that incarnation applies to non-human creation does not add anything to the idea of the immanence of the Logos in creation: “an immanence that naturally gives rise to pattern and meaning in creatures.”<sup>293</sup> Southgate thus applies incarnation only to the phenomenon of the Word taking flesh, and argues that the rest of creation can be related to Christ through his immanence, and not making reference to incarnation. This is the same point Rolston makes, and both argue that referring to God’s relationship with non-human creation as “incarnation” results in unnecessary problems.

Richard Bauckham clarifies this position with some useful thoughts. First, he argues that incarnation cannot be a template for all instances of God’s presence in the world, for there are numerous other examples of God’s presence in the scriptures – theophany, visions, conversation, care, inspiration – that he claims are different from incarnation. He argues:

Rather than making incarnation a model for all forms of divine presence, we need to develop a more differentiated understanding of the manifold ways in which God is present with and in this highly variegated creation.<sup>294</sup>

What is unique about the Incarnation among these forms of divine presence, for Bauckham, is that God is not simply present *with* his creation, or *in* a creature, but *as* a creature, the human Jesus of Nazareth. To say God was present *as* a different creature than Jesus Christ would be idolatry.<sup>295</sup> This means that Incarnation is not a concept to be associated with the God-world

---

<sup>292</sup> Ibid, 275.

<sup>293</sup> Christopher Southgate, “Depth, Sign and Destiny: Thoughts on Incarnation,” in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 207.

<sup>294</sup> Richard Bauckham, “The Incarnation and the Cosmic Christ,” in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 27-8.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid, 28.

relationship at-large – there are other ways of expressing that relationship which Gregersen and other deep incarnation advocates elide over with too much focus on incarnation.

John Polkinghorne, in an afterword titled “Reservations,” sums up these objections and re-emphasizes that the incarnation of Christ is a “unique and uniquely significant bridge between the life of God and the life of creation.”<sup>296</sup> Polkinghorne notes that the incarnate Christ has two natures according to Chalcedon, while all other creatures have only a single nature – thus extending the concept of incarnation to them is inappropriate.<sup>297</sup> Polkinghorne is more than happy to admit that the *work* of the Word of God is manifested in the order of the universe, acting in accord with the Holy Spirit. But this is not the same as incarnation, which is about God participating in creation’s suffering from within creation.<sup>298</sup>

Essentially, while it is acceptable to claim that God is immanent in all creation – even that Christ as Logos is immanent and forms it – the sticking point between these two perspectives is whether this immanence has anything to do with the Incarnation. Soteriology is important for the deep incarnation advocates, as they see the redemption of humanity in Christ as extending to the rest of creation. However, as the redemption of humanity depends on the assumption of a fully human nature by the Word, as the Word “dwelt” in flesh, then redemption of the rest of creation does depend on how far Christ can be understood to “dwell” in it as well. For the latter set of scholars just analyzed, the Incarnation is only about the presence of God *as* Jesus Christ, while all other God-world relationships fall under the category of divine immanence. For the deep incarnation advocates, the Incarnation is not an exception, but rather the revelation of a rule. To help arbitrate this issue, let us look at the scholars whose essays in this volume concern patristic ideas on the Incarnation, more specifically those of Athanasius of Alexandria and Maximus the Confessor.

---

<sup>296</sup> John Polkinghorne, “Afterword: Reservations,” in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 258.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

*Patristic Ideas on the Incarnation*

John Behr and Denis Edwards, in their essays in the volume, both examine and draw upon how Athanasius understood the Incarnation of Christ, largely through his classic double work *Against the Pagans* and *On the Incarnation*. Behr highlights how Athanasius understands creation to be unstable and in flux, tending towards dissolution; for since it was created from nothingness, it has nothingness as its subsistence. Only the will of God keeps creation from lapsing back into non-being. The incarnation then, Behr argues, is an act of God to ensure its stability, as the eternal Word unites himself to created matter:<sup>299</sup>

This coming of the Word to creation is not simply a matter of his presence within creation. It is, rather, a transformation of the creation's natural "flux and dissolution," its tendency to return to the nonbeing from which it was created, into an order and arrangement that bears the imprint of the Word and demonstrates the providence of God. And, most importantly, Athanasius (following Colossians) identifies this creation as the church.<sup>300</sup>

In this way, Behr argues that Athanasius sees the Incarnation as inherently transformative and reciprocal: it is not simply a one-way revelation of God in the material world, but the transformation of those who join the body of Christ into the firm and stable existence that is the church.<sup>301</sup> Thus the Incarnation is inherently about more than simply the personal redemption of humans – it is about moving creation from corruptibility to incorruptibility, from being founded on nothingness to having a secure foundation in the Word.<sup>302</sup>

Denis Edwards also emphasizes this transformative understanding of the Incarnation for Athanasius, arguing that Athanasius "makes no sharp division between God's creative act and God's deifying act. He sees the whole natural world as sharing, in its own way, with human

---

<sup>299</sup> John Behr, "Saint Athanasius on 'Incarnation,'" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 89-91.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-6.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-8.

beings in salvation in Christ.”<sup>303</sup> As Edwards notes, this naturally extends salvation to the wider creation because of the close interconnection between humans and the rest of the world.<sup>304</sup> All creatures participate in the Word in their own distinct ways. Edwards concludes that the Incarnation means that God is now forever a God of matter and flesh, which are now embedded in the life of the Trinity – through the Word then, all of creation is transfigured.<sup>305</sup>

Torstein Theodor Tollefsen’s essay examines Maximus the Confessor’s ideas, and specifically highlights how all of creation is meant to be redeemed in Maximus’s system. For Maximus, God had two steps in his plan for the cosmos – creation and salvation – both of which centered on Jesus Christ, and reached fulfillment in hypostatic union. Far from meaning simply the union of divine and human natures in the one person of Christ, Tollefsen argues that the hypostatic union is for the sake of all creatures, to achieve union with all being.<sup>306</sup> He connects this with the idea of the *logoi*, but Tollefsen argues that the eternal Logos himself is many *logoi*, claiming that particular creatures are defined, known, and loved in Christ.<sup>307</sup> While Maximus’s theology of the *logoi* pertains to the eternity of Christ, not the Incarnation *per se*, Tollefsen sees an incarnational character to Maximus’s cosmology – it is Christocentric, a “beautiful picture of the cosmos as it comes forth from God in its procession (that is, creation) and converts to God in the final restoration.”<sup>308</sup>

These analyses of patristic ideas on the Incarnation reveal that these Church Fathers clearly saw cosmic implications of the Incarnation, and that the Incarnation affects creation down to its most fundamental level. As Edwards and Tollefsen note, you cannot disconnect the incarnate Christ from the rest of creation – and as Behr notes, the Incarnation is the firm foundation for the salvation of the cosmos. Thus, within patristic ideas, we find recourse for those who would extend the Incarnation beyond the human sphere.

---

<sup>303</sup> Denis Edwards, “Incarnation and the Natural World: Explorations in the Tradition of Athanasius,” in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 164.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 165-6.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, 167-8.

<sup>306</sup> Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, “Saint Maximus the Confessor on Creation and Incarnation,” in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 100.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, 102-3.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

*Response: Incarnational Naturalism*

The patristic analysis above shows that the Church Fathers saw the Incarnation as relating to the entire created order, beyond just humanity. The scholars in this volume opposed to deep incarnation make a distinction between divine immanence and incarnation. But just how far does this distinction go? For the scholars drawing on patristic ideas, the Incarnation is directly tied to the cosmic order – it seems strange to distinguish the Word’s relationship to the world as something different from incarnation, if it is incarnation that reveals the Word’s relationship to the created order.

For Gregersen, writing in the final chapter of the volume, the opposers to deep incarnation make the distinction between incarnation and immanence by separating God from his works – the Incarnation is about God’s being, while immanence is about his activities. Gregersen criticizes this as a distinction between substance and energy that, he claims, does not work in discussions of Christian metaphysics, particularly the Trinity.<sup>309</sup> I understand Gregersen to mean here that, in God, one cannot claim that God’s energy is somehow different from God – rather, God’s energies communicate God’s being, and thus to claim that divine immanence is wholly different from what is revealed in the Incarnation is to separate God’s energies from himself, which would make them not God’s. Gregersen argues:

I’m not happy with drawing a too-principled line between an ontological and agential understanding of the embodied Logos...I agree that the presence of Christ is about an agential and personal presence, I also follow the basic intuition of Bonhoeffer that Act and Being can’t be divorced in theology. One cannot speak of a presence of Christ for us (and other creatures) without Christ simply being there for us (and others).<sup>310</sup>

---

<sup>309</sup> Gregersen, “Deep Incarnation: Opportunities and Challenges,” in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 367.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 368.

For this reason, Gregersen welcomes the insights from the patristic scholars, who he argues do not separate the “work of Christ” from the “person of Christ” – following Maximus, Christ’s work is salvific, and his salvific work is embracing creation into his being.<sup>311</sup> Immanence and Incarnation cannot thus be separated so sharply as implied by the scholars in this volume who oppose deep incarnation.

To further emphasize and clarify this point, Christopher C. Knight’s work on his self-coined “Incarnational Naturalism” may be helpful.<sup>312</sup> Knight also draws heavily on Maximus’s ideas of the *logoi* inherent in creation – however, he also makes it especially clear that the presence of *logoi* in created things is, in effect, the presence of Christ as the eternal Logos. As Knight notes, Maximus understood *logoi* as being uncreated – Knight explains how the Eastern patristic writers tend to use the distinction between uncreated and created, rather than natural and supernatural, and while things like angels and spirits may be considered supernatural, only God is uncreated.<sup>313</sup> The uncreated-created distinction thus defines what is God and what is not God – and if the *logoi* are uncreated and within creation, then that means God is present with creation, specifically the Logos of whom all *logoi* are manifestations.<sup>314</sup> In this way, Knight reasons that the whole of the world follows the pattern of the Incarnation: while the eternal Logos becomes incarnate as Jesus Christ, the eternal *logoi* are present and active within all created things.

Such a description of “God-within-creation” sounds like a form of panentheism, which Knight happily applies to the Eastern tradition’s view of creation. As Knight also notes, the Eastern tradition also has no concept of “pure nature” to which grace must be added supernaturally – the lack of a separation between grace and nature means all of creation requires God for its continued existence, and thus is intrinsically bound up with God’s active presence. This is why Knight names this worldview “Incarnational Naturalism” – it is an understanding that the order of nature inherently involves the present Logos, and thus the Incarnation is not a supernatural

---

<sup>311</sup> Ibid, 367-8.

<sup>312</sup> Christopher C. Knight, *Science and the Christian Faith: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2020), 215.

<sup>313</sup> Christopher C. Knight, “An Eastern Orthodox Critique on the Science-Theology Dialogue,” *Zygon* 51,3 (2016): 585.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid, 583.

intrusion of God into nature, but a revelation of the very foundations of creation.<sup>315</sup> If the presence of the Logos is not always apparent in nature, as some of the scholars argue above, it is because, for Knight, the patristic sense of creation is also inherently eschatological – creation is moved from its fallen state to its transfigured state in Christ, and thus our experience of the world as we understand it may be better termed “subnatural” than natural.<sup>316</sup>

Knight’s ideas help bolster Gregersen’s conviction that, in Christ, being and act cannot be so sharply divorced as to remove the incarnate Christ’s presence and solidarity within and with the rest of creation. A patristic emphasis on the cosmic scope of the Incarnation, especially from Eastern thought like that of Athanasius and Maximus, shows how the Incarnation not only influences all of created reality, but also reveals the relationship between the divine Logos and creation. If our discussion of *Christ and the Created Order* emphasized the distinction between the world accessible by science and God – corresponding to the distinction between humanity and divinity in Christ – then our discussion of Incarnation affirms the unity between God and creation in Christ. To reflect further on the character of that relationship – and what it says about the nature of God – let us now turn to our third edited volume to discuss how kenosis figures into all of this.

### ***The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis – Analysis and Response***

*Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.<sup>317</sup>*

In *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, the scholars contribute essays that view creation and the God-world relationship as essentially kenotic, or self-emptying. The concept of kenosis largely draws from the above Philippians passage in which Christ, being divine, is said to have emptied himself in order to assume human nature. This is viewed as an exemplary act of divine

---

<sup>315</sup> Ibid, 583.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid, 586.

<sup>317</sup> Philippians 2:6-8, NRSV.

love, as the divine Son of God embraces human realities of limitation and suffering in solidarity with us. The question then follows, to what extent does this Christological idea of kenosis characterize other aspects of the world, God, and the God-world relationship?

The scholars in this volume answer this question in a number of different ways. Sarah Coakley, in her essay, characterizes the other scholars as using kenosis in three different (but related) senses: first, in a Christological sense, referring to the direct meaning of the scriptural passage above; second, in a Trinitarian sense, as the kenosis of the Son comes to characterize the nature of Trinitarian relations; and third, in a general sense pertaining to creation and the God-world relationship, in which kenosis defines God's general behavior towards the world, particularly the world described by science. As Coakley notes (with a touch of criticism), most of the essays in the book begin by addressing the third sense of kenosis, and only appeal to the former two as an illustration or support.<sup>318</sup>

In making creation their starting point, several essays in this volume articulate a kenotic theology of creation by revising traditional theology to fit with both the vision of the world portrayed by modern science and with what they believe to be the theological implications of kenosis. Other essays take a much more limited approach, and look for evidence of kenosis at work in creation through the findings of modern science, specifically in animal and human behavior. However, it is the former set that dominates the tone of the volume, and as such it also draws criticisms from within, namely from Coakley and the editor, Polkinghorne. In my response, I will sustain Coakley's criticisms and seek to highlight the extent to which kenosis does have value in characterizing the God-world relationship.

### *Revising Traditional Theology*

Keith Ward introduces his essay by providing a brief account of the traditional theological view on kenosis. Traditionally, God is eternal, immutable, and without influence by temporal nature or events – whatever happens in the created cosmos does not change God in any way. The Incarnation thus also causes no essential change in God, but rather human nature is assumed by

---

<sup>318</sup> Sarah Coakley, "Kenosis: Theological Meanings and Gender Connotations," in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 193.

the eternal Word of God.<sup>319</sup> However, Ward claims that the 19<sup>th</sup> century Lutheran conception of kenosis revised this account, arguing that the Incarnation did change the Word of God in his nature, divesting him of divine attributes. This view asserts that God does change, God is passible and changed by the cosmos, and that God can even suffer. Such a move, Ward argues, is inspired by rejecting Platonic metaphysics and concepts of God (in which the eternal is superior to the temporal, the impassible to the passible) in favor of a metaphysics based on modern science. However, it is also more directly inspired by the desire for God to truly enter into the human situation, which this line of kenotic theology believed impossible if the Word retained his divine attributes.<sup>320</sup> It is this line of thought that several authors in this volume, as well as the tenor of the entire volume, follow – and this redefining of what it means to be God has implications for the God-world relationship. As Ward notes, “one might well think that the divine sharing in finite experience and action cannot be confined to just one case on the planet earth, the case of Jesus. God must share in all finite experience, where in the universe it is.”<sup>321</sup> Such is the basis for an essentially kenotic view of the God-world relationship.

Jürgen Moltmann makes the most detailed and scripturally-based argument for such a view of the God-world relationship in the volume, while also adhering to the revisions in traditional theology necessary for it. For Moltmann, all of the classical attributes of God – omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, immortality, impassibility, and immutability – are Aristotelian metaphysics,<sup>322</sup> and “have little to do with God’s attributes according to the history of God to which the Bible testifies.”<sup>323</sup> Moltmann argues that one must dispense with those attributes to describe God, for kenosis implies that God self-limits in his relationship to the world, drawing near to his creation and becoming bound up with it.<sup>324</sup> Moltmann uses the Jewish idea of “the

---

<sup>319</sup> Keith Ward, “Cosmos and Kenosis,” in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 152-3.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, 153-5.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>322</sup> Note the contrast between Ward’s assertion of the influence of Platonic metaphysics on theology, and Moltmann’s assertion of the influence of Aristotelian metaphysics on theology – I would argue that these differing claims, made in consecutive chapters, reveal less of a desire to accurately trace lines of intellectual descent, and show that these authors’ aim is to simply discredit traditional theology with any available appeal to Greek metaphysics.

<sup>323</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, “God’s Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World,” in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 140.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

Shekinah,” or God’s indwelling, found in the Old Testament as support for this claim: in the Shekinah, God accompanies the Israelites through their struggles and suffering, even unto exile, and thus self-humiliates to be with his people. Moltmann sees this idea as a precursor to the Christian use of kenosis and the cross, in which “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 18:8) reveals that the cross is an essential part of who God is, and that his own self-humiliation is an essential part of his relationship to creation.<sup>325</sup>

Ian G. Barbour, in the first essay of the volume, articulates what he believes to be five reasons for also abandoning traditional theological conceptions of God and embracing this kenotic view of the God-world relationship: the integrity of nature as portrayed by science, the problem of evil and suffering, human freedom, the cross, and feminist critiques of patriarchal models of God. For Barbour, the traditional theological view is that God is the “absolute ruler of the universe,” completely unaffected by the world and predestining every event. Barbour argues that his five reasons all belie this traditional picture, and he thus argues for a process philosophical view of God and the universe, in which God participates in the suffering of the world he created through voluntary self-limitation, or kenosis.<sup>326</sup> Arthur Peacocke, in the following essay, expands on this idea of co-suffering by emphasizing the immanence of God in creation as necessitated by the science of biological evolution – God must be constantly creating through the processes of the world.<sup>327</sup> As such, if creation suffers – and God is in creation – then God must suffer in, with, and under the creative processes of the world in time.<sup>328</sup> Peacocke understands the kenosis of Christ as revealing the Logos active in creation, but then extends this further by arguing that the cross also extends to the Father, for if the Father was with Christ then he must also have suffered with him.<sup>329</sup> This view makes the co-suffering of God with creation not simply a personal suffering on the part of Christ, but a suffering of the divine nature itself.

---

<sup>325</sup> Ibid, 146-7.

<sup>326</sup> Ian G. Barbour, “God’s Power: A Process View,” in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 1.

<sup>327</sup> Arthur Peacocke, “The Cost of New Life,” in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 23.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid, 41-2.

Paul S. Fiddes further revises the traditional picture of God by arguing that if God created the universe out of love, then God needs creation. For Fiddes, love comes from a need to be loved, and thus God can be said to have “needs” that must be satisfied.<sup>330</sup> Fiddes claims a scientific basis of “needs” from the biological drives towards survival, and argues that higher levels do not supersede needs but transform them – and thus it is appropriate that God should also have needs.<sup>331</sup> Fiddes understands that this idea may be “outrageous,”<sup>332</sup> as it does deviate from traditional thinking about God’s love – this contrast will be addressed later. Presently, I aim to show how each of these scholars begins with a premise from either scientific or theological concerns, and uses it to revise traditional theology to attempt to articulate a more satisfying portrayal of the God-world relationship.

### *Kenosis as Standards for Human Behavior*

Several other authors in this volume, rather than articulating a revised metaphysics of the God-world relationship, still claim to understand creation as inherently kenotic, and do so by examining evidence of kenosis in creation. Holmes Rolston III argues that creation is inherently “cruciform,” in that evolutionary processes involve tremendous suffering that contributes to the emergence of newer and different creatures: “Since the beginning, the myriad creatures have been giving up their lives as a ransom for many. In that sense, Jesus is not the exception to the natural order, but a chief exemplification of it.”<sup>333</sup> While Rolston acknowledges that such activity among creatures is not done voluntarily, and thus is not exactly kenosis, he does argue that the traces of kenosis are found in biological life through self-limiting behavior and participating in processes that transcend their own selves and result in greater diversity of life on Earth. And even so, humans are capable of kenotic behavior, and thus Rolston argues for a future in which humans impose limits on their own welfare on behalf of other species, for the good of the world and the sustaining of millions of other species.<sup>334</sup>

---

<sup>330</sup> Paul S. Fiddes, “Creation Out of Love,” in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 169-170.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid*, 177.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid*, 169.

<sup>333</sup> Holmes Rolston III, “Kenosis and Nature,” in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 59-60.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid*, 61-4.

Malcolm Jeeves, meanwhile, notes not only the ability to self-give and self-limit in humans, but in nonhuman species as well. Locating behaviors like altruism and moral acts in primates and developing humans gives one reason to believe, Jeeves claims, that there could be genetic and neural substrates for such behaviors.<sup>335</sup> Such a claim would give evidence to the idea that God's kenosis is at the basis for his creation, and that creatures can have kinship with the self-emptying Christ.<sup>336</sup> George F.R. Ellis, however, pushes back on Rolston's and Jeeves's ideas by arguing that kenosis and altruism are not exactly the same thing – altruism is a step in the right direction, but kenosis is only kenosis when related to the nature of God.<sup>337</sup> Kenosis is thus about sacrifice, which is when we choose to do what we would not otherwise do, if it were not for manifesting love.<sup>338</sup> As such, while Ellis does not exactly see kenosis in creaturely behavior, he does still see kenosis at work in creation: God acts in creation so as to elicit free response in love, and that requires giving creatures truly free will and autonomy.<sup>339</sup> This, for Ellis, explains the hiddenness of God (so as to not to overbear creation), but Ellis does not go so far as to claim any change in God's inherent nature.<sup>340</sup> Finally, Ellis sees kenosis as the principle for human ethical behavior: we need not always sacrifice everything in ourselves, but we must always be willing to sacrifice, and thus make every action kenotic to the extent appropriate for the situation.<sup>341</sup>

### *Criticisms of Volume's Approach*

This volume's approach to the God-world relationship through the concept of kenosis draws critique from both John Polkinghorne, its editor, and Sarah Coakley, in its concluding essay. Polkinghorne is clearly uncomfortable with revising traditional theology too much; however, he recognizes the need to balance the concepts of divine love and divine power, and he claims that an emphasis on the first is behind kenotic creation theologies, and an emphasis on the second is behind much of traditional theology.<sup>342</sup> On the one hand, he sees traditional theology's emphasis

---

<sup>335</sup> Malcolm Jeeves, "The Nature of Persons and the Emergence of Kenotic Behavior," in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 87-8.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-9.

<sup>337</sup> George F. R. Ellis, "Kenosis as a Unifying Theme for Life and Cosmology," in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 110-1.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>342</sup> John Polkinghorne, "Kenotic Creation and Divine Action," in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 91-2.

on the transcendent creator as essential for a Christian ground of hope, as such a God preserves creation from nothingness; but on the other hand, he wishes to affirm the idea of continuous creation, which seems to bring God into the life and suffering of creatures.<sup>343</sup> One solution he raises is distinguishing primary and secondary causes in creation, but he rejects the way this solution ruins any hope of analogy from the creaturely to the divine, and makes science and theology speak two different languages – Polkinghorne would rather affirm the unity of truth and knowledge in God and his action in the world.<sup>344</sup> What Polkinghorne eventually settles on, as a way to navigate these issues, is a proposal to understand special divine action as a cause among causes, as a result of God’s kenotic love. This way, God becomes bound up with creation through his loving choice to be among their causes, but still remains in governance and in direction of creation.<sup>345</sup> This proposal does not go as far as the other authors who propose revisions of traditional theology, but it does show how difficult these waters are to navigate, and raises the question of whether it is possible to reconcile the traditional and kenotic portraits of God. In any case, Polkinghorne is wary of going all the way to a process theological view of the God-world relationship – he notes, “The matter can be put in the bluntest terms by asking whether Whitehead’s God could be the One who raised Jesus from the dead.”<sup>346</sup>

Sarah Coakley also critiques the revisionist theologians, not just on their viewpoints but also on the way the volume’s discussion proceeds. She first critiques many of the volume’s authors for their lack of emphasis on Christ in a book on kenosis, arguing that they “do not even regard the technical material on Christological kenosis we have so far discussed as primary and central to their concerns vis-à-vis contemporary science and theology.”<sup>347</sup> As such, rather than using Christology as a lens through which to understand kenosis – and thus the other senses of kenosis, e.g. Trinitarian or God-world relationship – they use kenosis to mean a variety of related concepts such as “‘risk’ to ‘self-limitation’ to ‘sacrifice’ to ‘self-giving’ to ‘self-emptying’ – and even to ‘annihilation.’”<sup>348</sup> She continues, “The metaphysical and moral baggage that these varying nodal definitions carry is not by any means the same in each case, as we have shown;

---

<sup>343</sup> Ibid, 94-5.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid, 97-8.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid, 104-5.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>347</sup> Coakley, “Kenosis: Theological Meanings and Gender Connotations,” 198.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid, 203.

and nor is the *basis* on which the claim is made.”<sup>349</sup> As such, what results is a muddled mix of constructions, critiques, and revisions of differing theological pictures.

As Coakley notes, several authors spend significant time critiquing traditional theology, and specifically the idea that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and immutable – she notes that all are agreed this picture of God must be challenged. However, she responds by claiming that the traditional theological picture these authors build in order to tear down is one that Thomas Aquinas would have rejected too:

Suffice it to say that Thomism is not without intelligent answers to the ‘kenotic’-related questions pressed in this volume about theodicy, cosmology, human freedom, and the accommodation of Jesus’ human weakness and suffering in the Christological realm by means of the *communicatio idiomatum*; but it has not been the task of this volume to explore those alternative ‘classical’ perspectives in any depth.<sup>350</sup>

For Coakley, what drives these revisionist authors is emphasis on libertarian human free will – they take it as an “axiomatic good that humans should enjoy a type of freedom that places limitations on God’s power and foreknowledge.”<sup>351</sup> For Coakley, this vision calls to mind that of the male child’s repudiation of the power of the mother – it is a male fantasy that seeks independence to the rejection of mutual dependence and the maternal need of divine sustenance.<sup>352</sup> Coakley argues that such “incompatibilist” approaches are not the only ones to the question of free will, and that humans do not need to set themselves in opposition to God in order to make sense of the world.<sup>353</sup> Rather, Coakley continues, traditional theological pictures of divine interaction tend to be far more compatibilist, in claiming that true human freedom is when one is aligned with God’s will.<sup>354</sup> The problems resulting from a caricatured “traditional” God, who is unable to interact satisfactorily with a separate human world, come from inaccurate

---

<sup>349</sup> Ibid, 203.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid, 204.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid, 204-5.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid, 205.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid, 205.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid, 205-6.

portrayals of traditional theology, which has ways to explain kenosis in creation without revising key doctrines.

*Response: A Defense of Traditional Christology*

Coakley's criticisms of the other author's methods are well-made, as are her assertions that traditional theology has good reasons for its classical portrait of God that the kenotic scholars so doggedly attack. As she does not present those reasons in great detail (admitting that such an analysis of non-caricatured traditional theology would make for a much different, and longer, book),<sup>355</sup> I will present a perspective that defends the traditional theological portrait of God against these manifestations of kenotic scholarship through recourse to patristic Christology. David Bentley Hart, in his book *The Beauty of the Infinite*, gives an impassioned defense of the impassibility and immutability of God against those who would claim kenosis or the cross necessitates a change in the divine nature. For Hart, the impassibility of God is central to Christian hope, the very ground of the gospel and the promise of joy in God.<sup>356</sup> He writes, "God's *apatheia* is that infinite refuge from all violence and suffering that is the heart's rest, the deathless glory for which creation was shaped in the beginning as its tabernacle, which in Christ has been joined indivisibly to our nature."<sup>357</sup> As such, Hart argues that impassibility is actually a positive attribute of God identified with the "infinite love" of Trinitarian charity— for only if God is immune to suffering, impervious to any external force, and incapable of shifting emotions within himself, can there be a promise of a fully deathless and infinite joy in God's salvation of the cosmos.<sup>358</sup> It is this idea of impassibility as infinite love that Hart uses to argue that it is precisely because God has no needs – in contrast to Fiddes's claims above – that creation is good and reflects God's love; only because creation is gratuitous and uncompelled, can it reveal how God's divine life as Trinity is uncompelled, free love.<sup>359</sup>

Hart notes that this idea of God's impassibility is superficially challenged by the kenosis of the Word; however, he argues that it is only by holding with the seemingly paradoxical statements of

---

<sup>355</sup> Ibid, 204.

<sup>356</sup> David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003), 355.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid, 355.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid, 355.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid, 158.

church fathers such as Melito of Sardis and Cyril of Alexandria – who argued that Christ suffered in the flesh while remaining impassible as God – that the story of salvation in Christ can actually work.<sup>360</sup> For if Christ divested or emptied himself of divine attributes in becoming human, then, quite logically, God did not become human<sup>361</sup> – rather, a less-than-divine reality united itself to human flesh, which ruins any assertion that God truly experienced our human nature in all its sufferings, and thus undermines any salvific understandings of atonement or deification. On the contrary, Hart argues, it is because Christ remains impassible in his divinity that as a human he could suffer all things and bear it more fully than any other could, not in defeat but in saving love.<sup>362</sup>

Hart sharply criticizes “suffering God” theologies as dangerously narcissistic and heretical: he claims it is a temptation to desire a God who needs to learn to understand me, who must suffer like me or worse, and who must make me feel better by justifying my own condition and demands in his own self-denial and death. Hart argues that this is not only presumptuous, but also does a disservice to genuine suffering by denying it any hope (he asks if those who suffer truly want a companion in pain, or a savior). Rather, Hart asserts, patristic and medieval theologians desired a God of joy, love, and might, who was inexhaustible in life and undefeatable by pain – a God, in Hart’s words, “of infinite ontological health.”<sup>363</sup> Such infinite ontological health is communicated to us through the Incarnation of the Word, and this is the ground of Christian hope in Christ.

“Suffering God” theologies and explanations of the God-world relationship thus undermine the foundations of Christianity, and fail to do justice to theology in its engagement with science. It is similar to what we examined in Chapter 1, with the theologians in the mind-body debate – as Mark Harris notes, by beginning and framing their investigations as aiming to solve a metaphysical problem about the constitution of the human person, they often lose sight of the salvific importance of the soul in Christian theological discourse, and thus propose solutions that

---

<sup>360</sup> Ibid, 356.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid, 356.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid, 359.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid, 374-5.

“miss the point” of Christianity.<sup>364</sup> Likewise, the scholars in this volume aim to resolve what they view as problems in accounting for the God-world relationship given the worldview of modern science, and thus propose accounts of the Christian God that undermine the very point in believing in such a God.

What, then, are we to make of kenosis as a doctrine and the idea of Christ needing to “empty himself,” and how can we understand it in relation to creation? Hart draws on Athanasius, Cyril, and Augustine to argue that the patristic understanding of kenosis is not about the divesting of God’s divinity, but about the appropriation of weaker humanity into his own self. He quotes Augustine as saying:

When he accepted the form of a slave, he accepted time. Did he therefore change? Was he diminished? Was he sent into exile? Did he fall into defect? Certainly not. What then does it mean, ‘he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave?’ It means he is said to have emptied himself out by accepting the inferior, not by degenerating from equality.<sup>365</sup>

As Hart explains, there is a qualitative difference between the infinite and the finite, such that the self-emptying of God is not a change from what he is to what he is not, but rather a condescension in which he expresses himself in one instance of the finite. Hart adds “to say God does not change in the incarnation is almost a tautology: God is not some thing that can be transformed into another thing, but is the being of everything, to which all that is always already properly belongs.”<sup>366</sup> There is a qualitative, asymmetrical difference between God and creation, and thus there is no need for God to change in order to assume human nature. In this view, the language of emptying in Philippians 2 must be understood as principally referring to the following clause, “taking the form of a slave” and in the exaltation of Christ in the subsequent verses; as Hart puts it, kenosis is not about God leaving his divine life, but God “reaching down” to “seize up” creation into his own divine life.<sup>367</sup>

---

<sup>364</sup> Mark Harris, “When Jesus lost his soul,” 91.

<sup>365</sup> Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, 357. Quoting Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 74.5.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.

This approach of viewing Christ's actions through the lens of a qualitative, asymmetrical difference between the infinite and the finite, as Hart does to explain patristic views on kenosis, is more fully explored by Rowan Williams in his recent book *Christ the Heart of Creation* – which, like these edited volumes, also pertains to the nature of the God-world relationship as revealed in Christology. As the arguments in Williams's book pertain to all three of the concepts addressed in my analysis of these edited volumes – creation, incarnation, and kenosis – an examination of Williams's main argument will be helpful to respond to the overall discussion of this chapter. His emphasis on the asymmetrical character of the God-world relationship will prove crucial to the next chapter's development of a Christological method for relating theology and psychology.

### **Overall Response – *Christ the Heart of Creation***

In *Christ the Heart of Creation*, Rowan Williams undertakes a sweeping examination of the metaphysical rationales behind the scriptural, patristic, and medieval approaches to Christology. He claims that Christology is the primary theological exploration that shapes and clarifies how the finite world relates to infinite God.<sup>368</sup> And that relationship, he argues, is one of non-competition: early Christian thought believed that Jesus Christ possessed both divine and human action in a way that neither diminished the true presence of the other, and nor were both just present “side by side” in Christ, influencing each other from the outside. What Christology reveals is that God cannot be considered as just another item within the universe, nor can his action be just another agent among agents, for he is truly infinite, the ground of all finite states of affairs – but if that is true, then creation has an integrity and completeness of its own, in which God does not replace or abrogate created affairs but can enlarge and transfigure them.<sup>369</sup> He writes:

God and the world are not two things to be added together. Neither are they two things that are ‘really’ one thing. They exist in an asymmetrical relation in which

---

<sup>368</sup> Rowan Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation*, 6.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*, xii-xiii.

one depends wholly on the other, yet is fully itself, made to be and to act according to its own logic and structure.<sup>370</sup>

If “supernatural” acts replaced or interrupted “natural” acts, Williams notes, then they would not be truly “supernatural” – they would just be other “natural” acts in cause-and-effect relationships with the finite order. To truly be “supernatural,” to be infinite, divine action, “it must at the same time be genuinely the act of a finite, ‘natural’ agent, recognizably continuous with what that agent habitually does.”<sup>371</sup> Essentially, while finite acts can exclude other finite acts, finite acts cannot exclude infinite acts in the same way – infinite agency cannot be “something” that is added to finite causality, and thus finite actions can be seen as consisting of both finite and infinite agency within the same phenomenon. Williams notes that it is an asymmetrical relationship, as it cannot be claimed that the finite, observable reality is exhausting the infinite agency of its Creator, as if the finite determined the infinite; but rather, “the Creator is that which activates a potentially unlimited set of modes in which finite agency is exercised, but is also simply what it eternally is.”<sup>372</sup>

This metaphysical axiom – the non-competition between the finite and infinite – clarifies further the patristic understanding of kenosis, and opens up to further critique the above scholars who claim kenosis implies a change or suffering in the divine nature. The Incarnation is not about two divine and human “objects” who come into collision in a single space, and must therefore change to accommodate the other. The divine Word remains unchanged in the Incarnation – impassible, immutable, and omniscient as ever – not because of an intrusion of alien philosophy, but because of the integrity of the finite order, in which God “works not by displacing but by intensifying from within the capacity of created agency.”<sup>373</sup> Kenosis, then, is not a denial or diminishment of the infinite, but an embracing of a particular mode of finite life completely by divine agency, such that infinite agency itself becomes occasioned within the finite order.<sup>374</sup> It is precisely the non-competition of the finite and infinite that enables salvation: the divine is free from

---

<sup>370</sup> Ibid, xiv.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid, 56.

constraint, disintegration and passivity, and thus can effect the transformation of finite, human fragility corruption through Christ.<sup>375</sup> For the kenotic scholars observed above, God and the world are seen as two objects in causal relations, such that one externally influences the other, and these scholars read the traditional theological picture of God through such a lens and find it wanting – thus either God must change to give way to the world, or God and the world become identified to the point that what happens to the world determines the divine nature (either way, the world takes preeminence in determining the relationship). Williams’s exposition on traditional Christology rejects such mischaracterizations of the traditional God-world relationship – God is not another “thing” that is limited by his creation, Christ does not need to change in his divinity to become human, and the divine can act in and through the world without the infinite becoming constrained within the finite.

In the Incarnation of Christ, Williams argues, we see the way a single agent – that of the hypostasis of the Word of God – brings about activity (*energeia*) that is both divine and human in the world, as the Third Council of Constantinople affirms, upholding the Chalcedonian Definition. It is the personal reality of Christ that holds these two forms of distinct activity together, and as such Williams argues that “nature” as such, while never inactive, is itself not an agent – it is only activated as the nature of a particular hypostasis, realized as the *logos* or purpose of a particular agent. Connecting this with Maximus’s idea of *logoi*, Williams thus sees everything in the finite order as participating in the divine Word, made active in their own particular *logoi* according to the divine Logos.<sup>376</sup> Going back to the debate above between incarnation and immanence, Williams’s logic thus affirms the idea of Christ as present in all of creation, re-emphasizing the patristic support for a more expansive view of the Incarnation. Williams also includes the importance of John of Damascus’s and the Second Council of Nicaea’s defense of icons as evidence of the material world being empowered to enter into deeper participation in the Word.<sup>377</sup> He writes: “the semantically full reality of sacramental practice, itself deriving from the semantically ‘saturated’ materiality that is the historical body of Jesus, allows us to see our material environment as pregnant with significance.”<sup>378</sup>

---

<sup>375</sup> Ibid, 91.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid, 103-4.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid, 121.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid, 122.

Jesus Christ, then, is the “heart of creation” in that he lives simultaneously the depths of the divine life while also living a creaturely life on earth – all finite existence thus finds its meaning and relation to the infinite in him.<sup>379</sup> Williams argues that the Creator-creation relationship is essentially revealed by the relationship between the Word and his assumed human substance: not only because there is no “alterity,” or “one and then another alongside,” in creation, but because creation becomes most fully itself when it shares in Christ’s filial relation with the Father, an acknowledgement of the full dependency of creation on the divine life.<sup>380</sup> Also, this personal reality of Christ reveals that it is personal agency that relates the divine life with finite life – as the infinite and finite do not exert “causes” on one another, their relationship is effected through personhood, primarily the personhood of Christ.<sup>381</sup> Williams’s comments hearken to the discussion above of the volume *Christ and the Created Order*, in which I argued that “Christ as logic of creation” and “Christ as absence” approaches could be reconciled through his personal, rather than natural causal, presence.<sup>382</sup> The relationship between the infinite and finite is not one of competing natural causes (and thus there is no need for a “god hypothesis”), but rather the idea of personhood enables the infinite to be the inexhaustible ground for the finite, and the finite to participate more deeply in the infinite.

As noted in the previous chapter, Williams argues that scholars misunderstand the thread that links patristic, Byzantine and Western medieval Christological metaphysics if they think of it as discussing natures and essences as static objects; rather, scholars should understand Christological terms as describing agency.<sup>383</sup> Williams concludes by saying:

Any qualification of the Chalcedonian insistence on the completeness of the two ‘natures’ will in fact compromise the grammar of God: it will imply that God acts

---

<sup>379</sup> Ibid, xiii.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid, 222.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid, 2-3.

<sup>382</sup> This can be tricky to conceptualize – one way is Williams’s assertion that to say that Jesus of Nazareth is the person of the Word of God is to say that Christ is perfectly a human “what” and a divine “how.” In this way, Christ’s humanity (as created and finite) is no different than ours in nature or substance, but in mode of existence: it fully realizes in finite terms what is eternally true of the Word. By extension, finite creation can now participate in him to more fully partake of the divine nature.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid, 116-7.

in the world by displacing finite agency and thus cannot coexist in the same logical space as finite agency. But if this is the case, then divine agency becomes a rival fact in the universe; and as such it cannot make upon us the unconditional claim that it purports to.<sup>384</sup>

## Conclusion

This wide-ranging examination of the way scholars in the science-theology discourse employ Christology to discuss the God-world relationship has revealed some important insights for this project. In each of the three edited volumes discussed – *Christ and the Created order*, *Incarnation*, and *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* – certain key debates emerge about how exactly Christ characterizes the God-world relationship. The first is whether the integrity of the created order as understood by science requires a Christ who is present as its logic or who is hidden and removed from its processes; the second is whether the idea of Christ’s Incarnation extends beyond humanity into the material order; and the third is whether the idea of kenosis demands a revision of traditional theology both in order to understand Christ himself and to understand the God-world relationship. In each case, I have submitted that arguments which appeal to traditional Christology – especially patristic Christology – provide more satisfactory reconciliations of these debates than those which do not, and I have brought in the work of thinkers such as Alexei Nesteruk, Christopher C. Knight, and David Bentley Hart to substantiate such arguments further. By concluding with Rowan Williams’s work in *Christ the Heart of Creation*, I hope to show that a fuller understanding of traditional patristic Christology reveals a much different and more nuanced picture of the God-world relationship than is often presented in the science-theology discourse.

Given this project’s focus on the science-theology discourse surrounding humanity, I would like to note a few important takeaways from this chapter’s analysis that are relevant to the discussing the relationship between humans, as finite beings, and the infinite God (though by no means will they be the only relevant points from this chapter to be referenced later):

---

<sup>384</sup> Ibid, 271.

- To begin with, there is a clear distinction between the finite created order and infinite divinity that preserves the integrity of both. God does not act as an observable cause-among-causes in creation, and as such science does not need a “god hypothesis” for any of its explanations of natural phenomena. When investigating the finite, either material or human (or the materiality of the human), theological understandings need not abrogate or replace scientific understandings, which retain their own explanatory power. Christ’s fully human nature and energies show how finite beings can be accounted for on their own terms, through their own causes, without need of a divine cause to replace or add to any of their essentialities.
- However, this distinction does not remove God’s *personal* presence in creation through the Logos. As such, a proper understanding of the Incarnation of Christ necessitates an understanding of its applicability beyond humanity to the entire created order, as a key to the way in which Christ is immanent in everything. As Christ is bound up with everything in creation, it is his personal unity that holds all of creation together, and gives it a unity and integrity of its own. This is why we can say that all things find their fulfillment in Christ, even if he is not observable as an acting natural cause – personhood gives unity between the finite and infinite in a way that differs from unity according to nature.
- And finally, both the distinction and unity between creation and God are made possible and held together by the essential *asymmetry* between the finite and the infinite. As the two are not on the same causal plane, they cannot be compared and weighed against each other – but rather, the finite has its being in the infinite, and the infinite is not exhausted by the finite, but rather appropriates it into itself and transfigures it from within its own nature. This asymmetry is what rejects kenotic God-world models in which divinity suffers, is changeable, or is determined by the finite; as both Hart and Williams note, it is precisely because the infinite is what it is that finite being can have both its own integrity and hope for deeper participation in the divine.

These takeaways are very much in line with what Stump and Smith have asserted about the Chalcedonian Definition’s relevance to God and the world, and to theology and science – and indeed, one can see parallels between the principles set in the Chalcedonian Definition to

understand Christ, and the above takeaways for understanding the God-world relationship. As Christ has two distinct natures, so are the created order and God distinct. Christ's single personhood holds the two distinct natures together, just as Christ's personal presence holds together God and the created order. And the asymmetry between divinity and humanity in Christ reveals the asymmetry between God and the created order, such that there is no competition or exclusion between them. This substantiates the idea that it is the revelation of Creator and creation, infinite and finite, in Christ that, as Williams argues, sets the metaphysics for God, humanity, and the world. Once this Chalcedonian Christological understanding of God and creation is set, discussions of reconciling scientific and theological perspectives should proceed in accordance with the above takeaways.

As such, let us now turn to exploring how this Chalcedonian understanding of scientific and theological perspectives informs a method for relating the disciplines of theology and psychology.

## Chapter 4: A Christological Method for Relating Theology and Psychology<sup>385</sup>

### Introduction

The previous chapter established the idea that Christ is the revelation of the God-world relationship, and particularly that Chalcedonian Christology shapes our understanding of the relationship between the finite order and the infinite. Following these conclusions, this chapter argues for a similar understanding of the relationship between the claims of theology and psychology, as disciplines which study humanity from the perspectives of God and the finite world respectively. This chapter thus marks the key step in understanding how the conceptual material from the first three chapters of this thesis can be constructively applied to relating scientific research on humanity with Christian theological anthropology. I aim to establish a Christologically-grounded method which can be applied to relate modern psychological research and traditional theology.

I begin by making some preliminary remarks about the presuppositions inherent in this chapter. The disciplines of psychology and theology both make claims about human beings. How we should understand these two sets of claims, particularly in their relationship with each other, is not often straightforward. The differing methodologies of the two disciplines, as well as the distinct nature of each discipline's claims, make it complicated to relate the insights these two disciplines provide on humanity. As such, in order to identify and discuss relationships between theological and psychological claims, it is first necessary to address the form of the relationship between the two disciplines. This chapter aims to identify the relationship between theology and psychology as grounded in a Christological understanding of reality.<sup>386</sup>

---

<sup>385</sup> An earlier version of this chapter is in press for publication in the edited volume *Creative Pluralism? Images and models in science and religion* as part of Springer's *Issues in Science and Theology* series, with the title "Christology, Psychology, and Participation: A Model for Relating Psychological and Theological Understandings of Humanity" – all reused content is reproduced with permission from Springer Nature.

<sup>386</sup> In many respects, this chapter represents my response to Ian Barbour's famous fourfold typology for relating science and religion: conflict, independence, dialogue and integration. My aim in this chapter is not to critique Barbour's typology (hence this comment's relegation to a footnote), but I mention it to note that it was an influence on my thinking as I was formulating this Christological method for relating psychology and theology. My suggestion, as this chapter will argue, is that psychology and theology exist in a relationship of participation, as understood through the relationship between humanity and divinity as expressed in the Chalcedonian Definition.

When constructing and articulating a method for relating disparate disciplines like psychology and theology, it is important that scholars respect both disciplines and do not misrepresent or disregard either discipline's claims or methods. There are many different ways to approach interdisciplinary work in such a manner, but the method proposed in this chapter approaches the psychology-theology relationship through Christology and the corresponding revealed relationship between humanity and divinity in Jesus Christ,<sup>387</sup> thus building on this thesis's prior arguments on the Christological foundations of humanity and the God-world relationship. While primarily constructed from the vantage point of theology, this Christological method also aims to engage various psychological fields without disregarding their claims and methods.

Given the diversity of practices and ideas that fall under the scope of psychology and theology, any method relating the two disciplines must characterize the relationship broadly, but still provide some method for engaging specific claims. Indeed, just speaking of relating the disciplines of "psychology" and "theology" in such broad terms does risk essentializing the disciplines in such a way as to misrepresent the inherent diversity and nuances within each. As J. Wentzel Van Huyssteen helpfully notes, rather than speaking of "theology" and "science" as a-contextual terms, it is more useful to focus on specific theologians, on specific scientists, and on shared problems.<sup>388</sup> Approaching shared, specific issues through an interdisciplinary lens is the goal of developing this Christological method: this chapter, however, takes a broader picture of each discipline with the understanding that specific theories, concepts and thinkers of both disciplines – psychology and theology – are treated with more context in the application studies that comprise the subsequent chapters of this thesis. This chapter first seeks a methodological ground for relating the particularities of the two disciplines by exploring how Chalcedonian Christology can characterize the relationship between the broader categories of "psychology"

---

<sup>387</sup> There is often a distinction made in theology between natural theology and revealed theology, the former drawing its insights into God from human reason and observation alone, and the latter drawing its insights into God from God's revelation in Christ and the scriptures. As mentioned in the Introduction, if such a distinction must be made, then Christology, especially as traditionally understood, falls on the "revealed" side of the distinction. Much of what is said in this chapter about theology would hold differently for a natural theology that sought to know God wholly apart from revelation – however, as this thesis is concerned with how Christological concepts and terms can be useful to the science-theology discourse, the discipline of theology that this chapter discusses is theology grounded in revelation from God, as the discussion of Alexei Nesteruk's work below will elaborate.

<sup>388</sup> J. Wentzel Van Huyssteen, *Alone in the World? Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 40.

and “theology” – while one cannot remain content with essentialized definitions, proceeding with these broader categories can be useful when laying methodological foundations for further, more narrowed explorations.

This chapter will focus on the disciplinary claims that psychology and theology make. While it will be important to consider the methods of each discipline in addressing their relationship – especially how the empirical, observational methods of psychology, and the revealed experience of theology affects the nature of their claims – ultimately, the comparison in this chapter and in the rest of the thesis will be between the sets of claims about the human person that result from the investigations of these disciplines. In terms of actual practice, psychology is often practiced without reference to theology, and theology is conducted without reference to any research from modern psychology; as such, both disciplines can operate entirely independently of each other, at least in practice. However, the claims that result from such practices both concern the human person; as we generally do not conceive of a “psychological person” and a “theological person” as two distinct persons, there needs to be a way to account for how the sets of claims that arise from these disciplines can be reconciled in their approaching of the human person. As such, it is appropriate to seek a method to relate the two disciplines of psychology and theology on the level of their claims about humanity – and to do so, this chapter will appeal to Chalcedonian Christology.

As I have discussed in the previous three chapters, Christology articulates how God and humanity are revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, notably in the expression of the Chalcedonian Definition, which professes Christ to be a single person possessing two natures, divine and human. Following this logic, this chapter’s proposed Christological method is intended to explore how claims from theology and psychology, as disciplines which concern God and humanity, could be integrated into a unified understanding of humanity without compromising either discipline. Ultimately, I submit that the relationship between psychology and theology should be seen as one of *asymmetrical participation*, with a particular emphasis on the unitary role of personhood. A participatory metaphysics, in traditional theology, is one in which the finite order has its own being from sharing in the infinite God, yet remains distinct

from and in a relationship with God.<sup>389</sup> Following this, the following points will be made in this chapter:

- The participation of Christ’s humanity in his divinity, according to Chalcedonian Christology, serves as a guide for understanding how psychological claims about humanity can relate to theological claims about humanity.
- There is a unified phenomenon of personhood which psychology and theology both approach and consider as an object of inquiry. There is not a “psychological” human and a “theological” human as two different persons, but rather psychology and theology describe the singular human person in different ways.
- Psychology and theology are distinct in claims and methods, but are also *asymmetrical*. This asymmetry recognizes that psychology’s claims have their ultimate being in theology’s claims, but also that the distinction between the two is a difference in kind, rather than simply magnitude or priority: this chapter will highlight how theology’s method is different in kind from the empirical methods of psychology.

To come to these conclusions, this chapter develops its argument in three parts. The first part will examine the Christological argument of Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger in her book *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach*.<sup>390</sup> Hunsinger argues in favor of seeing the Chalcedonian Definition as a framework for relating psychological and theological concepts, and sets out three features of this framework for guiding such interdisciplinary reflection. This chapter supports Hunsinger’s approach, arguing that her three features correspond precisely to the Christological features of the God-world relationship identified in the previous chapter, and also map onto a participatory view of reality. The second part of the chapter examines two contrasting approaches to relating psychology and theology by Fraser Watts and Alexis Trader – both of which respond to Hunsinger’s approach – so as to further clarify Hunsinger’s argument and the importance of her Chalcedonian features. The examination of these differing approaches prompts further reflection on the methods and claims of theology

---

<sup>389</sup> Andrew Davison, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 1-2.

<sup>390</sup> Deborah Van Deusen Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

as a discipline, which I will provide by turning to the work of Alexei Nesteruk on relating theology and science.

In the final part of the chapter, by employing Andrew Davison's work on participation, and returning to Nesteruk's work on the participatory character of personhood, I argue that psychological and theological claims should be understood as related through participation, as asymmetric disciplinary claims that are distinct but unified. Such a view, derived from interpretations of Chalcedonian Christology, thus defines the methodological approach to Part 3 of this thesis, in which I will examine two applications for relating psychological and theological claims.

### **Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger: Differentiation, Unity, & Order**

As mentioned previously, the Chalcedonian Definition stipulates that Christ is one person in two natures, divine and human, which are both preserved as distinct and unmixed, yet held together in his person without division or separation. In other words, Chalcedonian Christology affirms Christ as one subject, while ensuring both his human and divine natures fully retain their essential characteristics.<sup>391</sup> In a similar way, if one follows this pattern for thinking about a human being, one can analogously affirm one subject of inquiry (in this case, the human person) in two ways of understanding: one from humanity's relationship with the uncreated (theology), and one from humanity's relationship with the created (science). The balancing act between respecting each discipline, while also aspiring to find some unity between them in reference to the phenomenon of human personhood, finds a way forward through this approach: singular subject, two forms of inquiry.

This is the approach taken by Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger in her book *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach*. While her book's stated aim is to provide practical approaches to pastoral counseling, its presuppositions are grounded in robust academic reflection on the relationship between the theology of Karl Barth and psychology. Hunsinger emphasizes the importance of the Chalcedonian Definition in Barth's thought, and

---

<sup>391</sup> John Meyendorff, *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982), 55.

thus she suggests it can provide a framework for understanding many different relationships, most notably the relationship between theology and psychology, calling this framework Barth's "Chalcedonian Pattern."<sup>392</sup> Hunsinger's use of the Chalcedonian Definition to define her approach is thus a useful template for developing a Christological method for relating theology and psychology.

### *Hunsinger's Three Features of the Chalcedonian Pattern*

In her book, Hunsinger identifies three essential principles, or features, of her Chalcedonian Pattern: "indissoluble differentiation," in that Christ's human and divine natures remain distinct and full; "inseparable unity," in that the two natures are united in the one person of Christ; and "indestructible order," in that there exists an asymmetry between the divine nature (which takes priority in the relationship) and the human nature (which takes the subsequent role in the relationship). These three features, Hunsinger argues, can be applied to the relationship between theology (analogous to the divine nature) and psychology (analogous to the human nature) in order to help clarify various theological and psychological issues.<sup>393</sup> To use an example: a person may experience both healing (as a scientific concept) and forgiveness (as a theological concept) within a singular event, such as occurred within many of Christ's miraculous healing stories. For Hunsinger, healing and forgiveness are distinct actions, and thus cannot be collapsed into one another (differentiation) – however, especially in the accounts of Christ's miracles, they are clearly related and occur together (unity), and the physical healing finds its ultimate significance in the spiritual forgiveness (order).

Hunsinger justifies the importance of each feature of her Chalcedonian Pattern by critiquing three thinkers whose relating of psychology and theology violates each feature in turn, and by demonstrating that problems arise as a result. First, she critiques Eduard Thurneysen, who in his *A Theology of Pastoral Care* appears to separate psychology and pastoral counseling too sharply. Thurneysen, according to Hunsinger, attempts to preserve the distinctiveness of psychological healing and the application of the Word of God through pastoral counseling, as well as the

---

<sup>392</sup>Deborah Van Deusen Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 62.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid*, 62.

priority of the latter over the former, but does so at the expense of “inseparable unity.”<sup>394</sup> She argues:

Can sin and neurosis really be so sharply separated from each other in practice? If neurosis is a symptom or sign of sin, in actuality don't they always occur somehow together?... Further, how can the healing of psychic conflict be *totally different* from the healing that occurs through the Word of forgiveness, if that healing includes the restoration of psychic health in some measure?<sup>395</sup>

Thurneysen, in claiming that healing through the Word is completely different than psychological healing, risks breaking apart the unity that must be affirmed if there truly is a relationship between a person's sin and neuroses, according to Hunsinger. As such, he ultimately devalues the contribution of psychology to the relationship, relegating it to an auxiliary or optional role, rather than one that is intrinsically connected to healing from the Word of God.<sup>396</sup> For Hunsinger, while Thurneysen is right to fear conflation between the two types of healing, and especially to fear the substitution of psychological concepts for theological ones, his emphasis on their disunity ultimately devalues psychology, and denies the reality that in practice the two types of healing tend to be closely bound up together, and thus must have some form of a relationship.<sup>397</sup>

If Thurneysen emphasizes differentiation at the expense of unity for Hunsinger, then Edward Edinger, a Jungian analyst, discounts the “indissoluble differentiation” of her Chalcedonian Pattern. Edinger, according to Hunsinger, “systematically collapses all meaningful distinctions between properly theological concepts and the language of depth psychology, interpreting the former by means of the latter.”<sup>398</sup> It is not the employment of Jungian psychology that is the problem, Hunsinger argues, but rather the fact that Edinger confuses Jungian psychology with theology by transforming theological concepts into Jungian psychological concepts.<sup>399</sup> For

---

<sup>394</sup> Ibid, 77-83.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid, 80.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid, 80-1.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid, 81-3.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid, 84.

example, the kingdom of heaven, for Edinger, is contact with the archetypal psyche, while Jesus is one who exemplifies the process of individuation. While Hunsinger admits these could be helpful analogies to read scripture from a psychological perspective, while still relating it to theological realities, Edinger rejects such analogizing, asserting instead that Christian symbols actually refer to inner psychological processes, not external realities.<sup>400</sup> Such an approach, Hunsinger argues, fails to appreciate the distinctiveness of each discipline, and in this way, it undermines theology, as all of its tenets are merely re-expressed as psychological or anthropological concepts.<sup>401</sup>

Finally, Hunsinger critiques Paul Tillich and his article, “The Relation of Religion and Health,” arguing that he treats theology and psychology symmetrically, placing salvation and physical healing on equal footing in importance.<sup>402</sup> While Tillich treats healing and salvation as distinct and yet related, Hunsinger argues that he appears to raise physical healing to the level of salvation, giving them a reciprocal relationship. Hunsinger also notes that Tillich appears to treat salvation more holistically than just its Christian understanding, drawing from Indian and Greek myths as well to explain the relationship between salvation and healing.<sup>403</sup> This is unacceptable to Barthian theology, Hunsinger claims, precisely because the specific nature of Christian salvation demands an asymmetry between God and creation, and thus between salvation and physical healing.<sup>404</sup> Tillich, meanwhile, sees the spiritual or theological dimension of reality as interpenetrated with all other dimensions of reality, including the physical and material, which goes against Barth’s understanding of the divine existing at a different level over all other dimensions of reality.<sup>405</sup> This asymmetry is essential to Christianity in Barth’s and Hunsinger’s view, as the creaturely order is contingent upon God – and while Tillich’s view rejects such an asymmetry in metaphysics, thus creating a symmetrical relationship between theology and psychology, Barth’s and Hunsinger’s view affirms that psychological realities point towards deeper theological realities in that order.

---

<sup>400</sup> Ibid, 86-7.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid, 87-8.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid, 88-9.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid, 90.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid, 90-1.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid, 93-5.

### *Assessing Hunsinger's Features*

In critiquing these three thinkers so as to analyze the pitfalls of compromising her three Chalcedonian features, Hunsinger makes a compelling argument as to why “indissoluble differentiation,” “inseparable unity,” and “indestructible order” must be essential features of any relationship between psychology and theology. The two disciplines are distinct and must remain so, yet they operate in a unity that cannot be disconnected, and they exist in an ordered relationship in which psychology finds its significance in theology as per Christian understandings of the asymmetrical relationship between creation and God.

It is important to note here that Hunsinger's three features align with the takeaways from the previous chapter about the Christological relationship between God and the world: the finite created order and infinite uncreated divinity are distinct and each has integrity of its own; the created and the uncreated are held together in the singular personhood of Christ; and there is an asymmetry between God and the world, as the created has its being in the uncreated, and the infinite is not exhausted by the finite. From this perspective, far from being simply a useful analogy, Hunsinger's Chalcedonian Pattern is building on a deeper metaphysical reality about the relationship between creation and God as defined by Chalcedonian Christology, and thus using her features to relate psychology and theology has grounding in traditional theology.

Hunsinger notes that her use of the Chalcedonian Pattern is derived from Barth's affinity with it: according to Hunsinger, Barth possessed a wide-ranging “Chalcedonian Imagination” and mused as to which features of reality could be related by employing the Chalcedonian pattern, including faith and works, heaven and earth, and even church and state.<sup>406</sup> However, she also notes Barth's warning to not systematize these connections or discern them indiscriminately, thus meaning that the Chalcedonian Pattern must be flexibly and appropriately applied.<sup>407</sup> She writes that, “The unity between matters like healing and salvation is essentially analogical, contingent, and

---

<sup>406</sup> Ibid, 234. Such musings are outside the scope of this thesis – the are just presented to highlight how much more appropriately the Chalcedonian Pattern applies to psychology and theology, as disciplines which specifically investigate humanity and divinity, the two natures of the Chalcedonian Definition.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid, 234-5.

eschatological in form,” meaning that the application of “inseparable unity” must be nuanced according to the particular matter that is being discussed between theology and psychology.<sup>408</sup>

Hunsinger’s and Barth’s cautions are understandable, as there are clearly dangers in uniting truths about God and creation in such a way that makes God contingent upon creation, rather than the reverse. However, my previous arguments about the Chalcedonian Definition being a revelation of the God-world (and thus God-humanity) relationship softens some of Hunsinger’s self-criticisms, as the Chalcedonian Definition here is not being used merely as an analogy, but appropriately to the concepts it concerns: psychology as the study of humanity, and theology as the study of God. Even Hunsinger’s cautions about applying the feature of “inseparable unity” indiscriminately are based in the assumption that such a unity between theological and psychological concepts exists, even if in specific pastoral circumstances it is difficult or impossible to discern the unity.<sup>409</sup> Thus, I submit that in relating psychology and theology one can be more bold about Hunsinger’s Christological method: while she mainly explains her three features to negatively define the parameters for how *not* to engage psychology with theology, I argue that her three features put forward a positive vision of reality in which there is a revealed theological justification for relating psychology and theology in precisely this way.

Another critique of Hunsinger’s three features is that they could really be collapsed into just one: asymmetry. Asymmetry, as a concept used to describe the relationship between God and the created order, encompasses both the notions of unity and differentiation, as we saw in Rowan Williams’s Christological use of the term. To say the created order and God exist in an asymmetrical relationship is to say that the created order is distinct from God, but that it ultimately grounds its very being in God – asymmetry thus preserves the non-competition between God and the world. The terms “order” and “priority” for Hunsinger therefore refer not to any abrogation of the psychological by the theological, but to an understanding that psychological claims ground their very being in theological claims – e.g. mental healing is grounded in the theological reality of salvation – just as all created realities ground their very being in God. To say that psychology and theology are in an asymmetrical relationship, in which

---

<sup>408</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid, 74.

theology has priority, is to say that the two are unified, differentiated, and ordered. Hunsinger's Chalcedonian model can thus be characterized more simply as one of Christological asymmetry.

Other scholars, however, have proposed different methodologies for relating psychology and theology, including by responding to Hunsinger's approach. In the next section, I examine two alternatives to Hunsinger's approach to relating psychology and theology. First, Fraser Watts, arguably the most prominent scholar of the psychology-theology academic conversation, criticizes and modifies Hunsinger's three features to create his own set of presuppositions for dialogue between psychology and theology. Second, Alexis Trader emphasizes Hunsinger's use of asymmetry to reinforce his own method of "discerning openness" to relating the specific psychology of cognitive therapy to the specific theology of Eastern Orthodoxy. In the next section, I argue that examining where Watts's and Trader's methods deviate from Hunsinger's reveals the difficulties in interdisciplinary dialogue that a Christological approach, such as Hunsinger's, helps to resolve, and also the need for further clarity regarding the method of theology as a discipline.

### **Methodological Responses to Hunsinger**

While Hunsinger writes about the applicability of relating psychology and theology in a pastoral context, Watts concerns himself with the academic psychology-theology dialogue: he distinguishes this from other interactions between psychology and religion, namely, the use of psychology in pastoral counseling (which Watts sees as a largely practical engagement), and the psychology of religion (which Watts defines as psychology observing and analyzing religious phenomena, usually from a detached viewpoint). The psychology-theology dialogue, for Watts, is "focused more on truth questions and less on practical ones."<sup>410</sup> Both psychology and theology make truth claims concerning several aspects of the human being, and thus this dialogue offers a way to bring these sets of claims into conversation. One goal of this dialogue that Watts highlights is "constructive mutual influence," in which the two disciplines benefit from engaging with the other:<sup>411</sup> for example, theology can challenge psychology's tendency to "slide from

---

<sup>410</sup> Fraser Watts, "Psychology and theology" in *The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion*, ed. Peter Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 190.

<sup>411</sup> Fraser Watts, *Theology and Psychology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 7.

legitimate to illegitimate claims”<sup>412</sup> when interpreting data, while psychology can provide empirical verification for theological claims<sup>413</sup> and make the human significance of abstract theological ideas more explicit.<sup>414</sup> While there is much to appreciate from Watts’s dialogue of constructive mutual influence for psychology and theology, I argue that Watts’s choice of presuppositions for conducting dialogue raise some questions that require consideration, particularly surrounding the notions of complementarity and equality between the two disciplines.

### *Fraser Watts on Psychology-Theology Dialogue*

In introducing his dialogical approach in his work *Theology and Psychology* and the edited volume *Forgiveness in Context*, Watts outlines his presuppositions for dialogue, several of which he develops by responding to Hunsinger’s approach with modifications. Watts characterizes Hunsinger’s three features for relating psychology and theology as follows:<sup>415</sup>

- 1) The two disciplines (psychology and theology) should be kept clear and distinct;
- 2) They should be brought into relationship with one another;
- 3) There should be a hierarchical relationship between theology and psychology, with theology taking the determinative role.

Watts agrees with these first two statements, but he rejects the third, arguing instead that neither discipline should be subordinate to the other.<sup>416</sup> Let us regard each of these presuppositions in turn, as Watts’s modifications to Hunsinger’s features are illustrative of important concerns that require consideration.

First, there is the idea that the two disciplines should be kept distinct from one another, which Watts leaves largely intact from Hunsinger. As Watts notes, psychology and theology have very different methods and discourses, so to try and mix them into one field, or to attempt to

---

<sup>412</sup> Watts, “Psychology and theology,” 191-2.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid, 196.

<sup>414</sup> Fraser Watts, “Relating the Psychology and Theology of Forgiveness,” in *Forgiveness in Context: Theology and Psychology in Creative Dialogue*, ed. Fraser Watts and Liz Gulliford (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 9.

<sup>415</sup> Watts, *Theology and Psychology*, 8.

<sup>416</sup> Watts, “Relating the Psychology and Theology of Forgiveness,” 2-3.

assimilate one into the other, would fail to do justice to either psychology or theology as disciplines.<sup>417</sup> In other words, it is important to remember that conducting dialogue between the two disciplines means to acknowledge the existence and particularities of the two disciplines.

Second, Watts argues that psychology and theology should be brought into a relationship with one another. I would argue that this is a subtle but important change from Hunsinger's feature of "inseparable unity," which, for Hunsinger, necessitates a much stronger and reliable connection between psychological and theological claims on humanity than what Watts envisions. Watts believes that the relationship between psychology and theology can be understood as having "complementary" perspectives on phenomena. He uses an analogy of the distinction between the "brain," as the grey matter inside one's skull, and the "mind," as the thoughts and feelings one experiences. If one's brain was examined while asleep for physical responses, and then upon waking one described the dreams they had, both descriptions of the sleep experience would be valid, but they would describe complementary phenomena.<sup>418</sup> Watts sees a similar relationship between psychology and theology, in that they can offer perspectives that can be "set side by side, complementing each other, rather than being seen as alternatives."<sup>419</sup> Watts elsewhere writes that science and religion answer different questions about the world, and thus their answers can be complementary, rather than conflicting.<sup>420</sup>

Finally, Watts breaks with Hunsinger's third feature, which he describes as "hierarchy," and argues instead that psychology and theology should not be discussed within a hierarchical relationship, with theology acting as the determinative side and psychology accommodating. Watts claims that to say one discipline is more important than the other is "not a good basis for a fruitful relationship."<sup>421</sup> Psychology should not be subordinated to theology in this view – constructive dialogue cannot come from a relationship of superiority and subordination.<sup>422</sup> It should be noted that this is not the most charitable reading of Hunsinger: the asymmetry

---

<sup>417</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>418</sup> Watts, *Theology and Psychology*, 8-9. Watts resists reductionist interpretations of the mind-brain distinction that render the "mind" phenomena redundant.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>420</sup> Fraser Watts, *Science Meets Faith* (SPCK: London, 1998), 4.

<sup>421</sup> Watts, "Relating the Psychology and Theology of Forgiveness," 3.

<sup>422</sup> Watts, *Theology and Psychology*, 8.

identified by her “indestructible order” feature is one of ultimate significance, or even eschatological significance, based on the qualitative difference between the divine and humanity, but nowhere does Hunsinger discount or subordinate psychological claims to theological claims.<sup>423</sup> Watts does not consider asymmetry in the way Hunsinger describes it; he does claim that he will admit a hierarchy of scope between the two disciplines, in that theology simply considers a wider and broader range of topics than psychology does, the latter being more narrowly focused. He likens this distinction to a panoramic view versus a close-up picture; but while one may be broader, neither should be considered “more important” when discussing the same subjects.<sup>424</sup>

### *Assessing Watts’s Presuppositions*

These three presuppositions – distinctiveness, complementarity, and equality – guide Watts’s approach to dialogue between psychology and theology. I agree with Watts’s argument that psychology and theology can benefit each other through dialogue, and that this is a worthwhile goal. His presuppositions raise some concerns however, as I believe they miss some of the nuance of Hunsinger’s original features, and open a question as to the precise relationship between psychology and theology with regards to shared truth. Thus, rather than focusing on constructive mutual influence, in this analysis I desire to explore more fully Watts’s claim that the psychology-theology dialogue is concerned with “truth questions.”<sup>425</sup> If the dialogue is concerned with truth, then one should look for ways in which psychology and theology can agree on truth claims, according to Watts:

(Science and religion) are each concerned with truth, and there cannot be multiple truths which are completely unconnected with each other...the issue is bound to arise of whether an approach to truth from one perspective squares with an approach from another...<sup>426</sup>

---

<sup>423</sup> Hunsinger explicitly rejects such an interpretation of “indestructible order” as hierarchy, arguing that asymmetry is what allows the relationship between divinity and humanity to be ordered in freedom, and not in hierarchical domination (Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling*, 63).

<sup>424</sup> Watts, *Theology and Psychology*, 8.

<sup>425</sup> Watts, “Psychology and Theology,” 190.

<sup>426</sup> Watts, *Science Meets Faith*, 13.

How does Watts's account of complementary relationality between psychology and theology fit with this claim? On the one hand, psychology and theology do provide complementary perspectives from their distinctive methods, as they describe humanity in fundamentally different ways – on the other hand, if there is no path to finding some unity between the two perspectives, then they are unconnected multiple truths. Looking back at Watts's analogy of the mind and the brain, the way Watts structures the analogy seems to create two separate objects of study: the mind and the brain, the personal phenomenological and the observable measurable. Extending the analogy to the relationship between theology and psychology, this complementary approach would imply two distinct objects of study, the psychological aspect of the human and the theological aspect of the human. This approach then still leaves unanswered the question of how the two “square” with one another, as opposed to just existing alongside each other in an unconnected way.

It is in making his point about complementarity that Watts cites Hunsinger's use of the Chalcedonian Definition as a model to follow of “distinct but related” realities.<sup>427</sup> However, without an account of the unity between psychological and theological perspectives, such an approach risks bearing more resemblance to the Antiochene school's dual subject Christology that was discussed in Chapter 2: just as the Word of God and Jesus of Nazareth can be conceptually separated without hypostatic unity in such a scheme, so are the mind and brain conceived separately without an account of an underlying unity. The Chalcedonian Definition, by affirming one person in Christ (in two natures), yields a model for dialogue in which there is but one object of study: Hunsinger's feature of “inseparable unity” appeals to just this, that there is one person who experiences both a psychologically describable effect and a theologically identifiable effect, and that these effects are intimately connected.

Part of the issue here is that “complementarity” is a rather ambiguous concept; as Léon Turner notes in a discussion of Watts's mind-brain analogy, the minimum standard of complementarity – that the disciplines being related are not wholly incompatible – is also not very constructive.<sup>428</sup>

---

<sup>427</sup> Watts, *Theology and Psychology*, 8.

<sup>428</sup> Léon Turner, “Dialogue within Dialogues: The Idea of the Person in Psychology and Theology,” in *Mutual Enrichment between Psychology and Theology*, ed. Russell Re Manning (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2021), 18.

Such a minimal approach may allow the cataloguing of different claims about humanity, but would say nothing about those claims' relationship to one another.<sup>429</sup> As such, Turner argues that complementarity must always be seen as a first step towards a more developed constructive project:<sup>430</sup> once it is understood that theology and psychology provide different perspectives, the next step is how to relate those perspectives. In this way, both Watts's constructive mutual influence and Hunsinger's Chalcedonian Pattern are examples of complementarity – the difference between the two approaches, as per my above analysis, is that Hunsinger's approach aims to identify a relationship of unity between the psychology and theology, whereas Watts's approach, while not explicitly denying that such unity exists, looks instead to find constructive mutual influence to benefit the two disciplines. While the latter is valuable in other contexts, the former – the Chalcedonian Pattern – more directly addresses the question posed by this chapter, as to the precise nature of the psychology-theology relationship.

Finally, let us examine Watts's presupposition of equality between theology and psychology. Watts's presupposition of an inherent, *a priori* equality between psychology and theology, while potentially useful in practice for resisting totalizing claims of one discipline over the other, is more concerning when addressing this question of the relationship between the two sets of truth claims from psychology and theology. To address this question, one must consider the particular methods of either discipline, and take into account each discipline's relationship to larger worldviews. To engage in a dialogue as Watts would endorse, in which neither discipline was devalued or denied, would require one to acknowledge both disciplines' methods as valid. Yet, acknowledging both methods as valid may not result in their claims being considered equals, or evaluable in the same way, due to the nature of each discipline itself. To explain this a different way: atheistic materialists may likely see an obvious hierarchy between empirical science and traditional Christian theology, and would prioritize them as such in dialogue (if engaging in such a dialogue at all), only admitting theology's input if it did not conflict with the empirical evidence. This approach would, however, deny all validity to the methods of theology, given that it would deny revelation and faith experience. Such an approach would not do justice to theology – but while an atheistic materialist may not care to do justice to Christian theology on its own

---

<sup>429</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid, 19.

terms, scholars who are theologically-inclined should care. If one is to truly do justice to both disciplines – psychology and theology – the dogmatic precepts of theology cannot be set aside.

I acknowledge that this argument about doing justice to theology carries risks of its own: namely, the temptation to justify the abrogation of psychological claims by theological claims, because the latter are sourced in revelation from God and are thus “truer” than psychological claims. However, far from creating such a situation, affirming the asymmetry between psychology and theology enables the corresponding affirmation of the truth of both psychological claims and theological claims. Watts changes Hunsinger’s term “asymmetry” into “hierarchy” when critiquing her presuppositions – and while asymmetry is not equality, it is not reducible to hierarchy either. As mentioned above, Hunsinger’s description of “indestructible order” and ultimately “asymmetry” was not to imply the subjugation of psychology to theology, or that any theological claim automatically takes precedence over any psychological claim: it was simply to acknowledge that from a dogmatic Christian perspective there is an asymmetry between God and humanity, and that psychological claims thus find their ultimate significance in theological claims.

Asymmetry, as described above, implies a difference in kind and not simply in degree – “hierarchy,” by contrast, would imply that theological and psychological claims are in effect the same kind of claims, and therefore one must give way to the other. Hierarchy is thus competitive, while asymmetry holds to Williams’s understanding of the non-competition between the infinite and the finite. Equality, as a rejection of hierarchy, ends up within the same framework of competition as hierarchy: to call theology and psychology equals is to imply that they are operating on the same finite level. However, it is precisely because the infinite and the finite are not operating on the same level that they can each possess their own full integrity. The principle of asymmetry thus allows both psychological and theological claims to possess full integrity and validity, while still identifying a relationship between them. When Hunsinger describes her feature of “inseparable unity” as being “contingent and eschatological,”<sup>431</sup> she is affirming this asymmetry: the psychological is contingent on the theological, the psychological points to the

---

<sup>431</sup> Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling*, 74.

ultimate fulfillment of the theological, and that is why we can affirm the non-competitive truth of both the psychological and the theological.

Before further exploring what this asymmetry between the methods and claims of psychology and theology might look like, let us look at how Trader aims to relate psychological and theological claims about humanity with a rather different approach.

*Alexis Trader on Cognitive Therapy and Patristic Theology*

Alexis Trader's book *Ancient Christian Wisdom and Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy: A Meeting of Minds* takes the opposite approach from Watts by embracing Hunsinger's idea of order, citing Hunsinger to support the idea that it is in a larger Christian worldview and framework that psychological ideas can find their ultimate meaning and significance.<sup>432</sup> Trader writes from the perspective of an Eastern Orthodox clergyman and scholar of the Church Fathers, but he also desires to seriously engage with contemporary psychological discourse surrounding mental health. If we think in terms of Hunsinger's features, Trader places an emphasis on the unity between the psychological and the theological in humans – as H. Tristram Engelhardt notes approvingly in the foreword, “with incarnate beings the spiritual will always be reflected in the psychological and the bodily”<sup>433</sup> – but always with an eye towards the fundamental asymmetry between psychological and theological perspectives. Engelhardt writes: “Mental health will look different in a world thought to be meaningless versus one in which the ultimate destiny of man is meant to be union with God”<sup>434</sup> – and as such, Trader argues for an engagement between psychotherapy and theology that is situated within theology's broader metaphysical worldview and goals.

Trader affirms his desire to neither degrade the patristic tradition by distorting its teachings, nor to degrade cognitive therapy by ignoring or muddying up its scientific methods.<sup>435</sup> Rather, he sees a naturally harmonious relationship between psychotherapy and Eastern Orthodox theology,

---

<sup>432</sup> Alexis Trader, *Ancient Christian Wisdom and Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy: A Meeting of Minds* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 2011), 17-18.

<sup>433</sup> H. Tristram Engelhardt, “Foreword,” in *Ancient Christian Wisdom and Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy: A Meeting of Minds* by Alexis Trader (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 2011), x.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

<sup>435</sup> Trader, *Wisdom and Therapy*, 5.

given the latter's penchant for using medicinal and therapeutic metaphors for both salvation and ecclesiology, e.g. seeing the Church as a "spiritual hospital."<sup>436</sup> Likewise, Trader sees much of the patristic pastoral tradition as being very similar to cognitive therapy in its focus on changing personal behavior and affirming the importance of thoughts and their correction to one's well-being.<sup>437</sup> As such, he rejects what he calls the "Tertullian Model"<sup>438</sup> for relating psychology and theology, in which one must reject forms of secular learning to adhere to a purely religious faith.<sup>439</sup> However, he also rejects what he calls a "Gnostic Model" in which theology is mixed with scientific and philosophical insights in a way that transforms Christianity into something that it is not, and distorts its true message and meaning.<sup>440</sup> Thus, Trader settles on a model which he calls "discerning openness," in which the best and most useful insights from science and philosophy are adopted into Christianity in such a way that transfigures the science and philosophy to become pathways to Christian truth.<sup>441</sup> Trader writes:

Theologically, discerning openness is grounded in the Orthodox teaching that there is only one unified created reality in time and space from which the uncreated energies of the Triune God are never absent. This presence of God historically in his Church and naturally in his creation enable the fathers to make use of material gained from empirical knowledge... Thus, when frail and mortal thought opens up into the immensity of Christ the God-man, the whole panorama of creation and history are beheld from the elevated vantage point of the mind of Christ.<sup>442</sup>

Trader here argues that it is the very presence of God working in creation that enables psychology and theology to be related, and also necessitates their relationship of asymmetry. He explicitly rejects the idea that the relationship between psychology and theology is like the relationship between a close-up and a panoramic photo (Watts's hierarchy of scope), and rather

---

<sup>436</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>438</sup> Harkening to Tertullian's famous anti-philosophical attitude, rejecting Athens for Jerusalem.

<sup>439</sup> Trader, *Wisdom and Therapy*, 13.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid, 18. Trader also appeals to the oft-used scriptural image of the Israelites taking Egyptian gold, such that pagan things can be put to godly use (9).

<sup>442</sup> Ibid, 17.

suggests the metaphor of a sentence, in which psychology provides the words and theology is the grammar that governs the words' order.<sup>443</sup> In this way, Trader argues that psychology is “descriptive” while theology is “prescriptive,” writing:

Even as psychology offers a descriptive account of how fallen man functions, thinks, and behaves, so theology can provide prescriptive and normative advice for the life, thought, and behavior of the new man in Christ.<sup>444</sup>

### *Assessing Trader's Approach*

Trader's approach heavily emphasizes the unity between psychology and theology in discussions of the human person, and their inherent asymmetrical relationship in which theology takes priority. However, his method could be critiqued as to whether it affords sufficient integrity to cognitive therapy as a scientific endeavor. Further probing this issue of how he treats cognitive therapy is useful, however, for clarifying how psychology maintains a distinctive role in its relationship to theology.

Each main chapter of Trader's book is structured as follows: 1. A brief introduction to a concept for discussion; 2. A theological explanation of the concept through exegesis of the Church Fathers; 3. An explanation of how cognitive therapy views the concept; and 4. A demonstration of how cognitive therapy's insights are also found in the Church Fathers. Given this structure, the emphasis appears to be on how cognitive therapy simply confirms the wisdom of Orthodox theology, without much rumination of the distinctive role of cognitive therapy in its relationship with theology.

One of Trader's stated goals for this engagement is “an informed and fair Orthodox Christian response to cognitive therapy as well as an appreciation of Orthodox ascetic theology by cognitive therapists.”<sup>445</sup> This would indicate simply a mutual appreciation, and not even the benefit that Watts would desire from such an engagement; however, Trader expounds elsewhere:

---

<sup>443</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid, 5.

While both patristic and cognitive approaches have great value in their own right and their own domain, knowledge about “the other side” is always helpful, and in the case of patristic thought, salvific. In other words, knowledge of cognitive therapy can help the spiritual father communicate with those who approach human problems with the psychological mindset that is prevalent in contemporary culture. Knowledge of patristic teachings can infuse the work of the cognitive therapists with meaning, purpose, and moral direction, especially when treating Christian patients.<sup>446</sup>

This does sound more like Watts’s constructive mutual influence, and indeed, it is easy to see how Trader’s book could contribute to this aim. However, the intellectual framework that Trader builds indicates a far deeper relationship between psychology and theology – if his argument is true about asymmetry being inherent in this relationship due to the asymmetry between God and the world, then one should be able to ground this relationship in some deeper underlying unity. Trader sees much harmony between patristic ideas and cognitive therapy’s claims – does this not point to an underlying unity between the two that can provide a stronger basis for a relationship than their mutual usefulness? “Discerning openness” as a method is more about theology’s response to psychology than about the integral relationship between the two disciplines’ claims – it is a claim about how useful psychology can be to theology, and possibly vice versa. Also, there is an implication in the above quote that the only reason this engagement is necessary is because our contemporary culture views humanity through the claims of psychology; this is one step from neglecting the contributions of psychological research on our understanding of humanity due to its cultural contingency, and such neglect does not respect psychology as a discipline.

This is not to critique Trader’s handling of cognitive therapy concepts, which is very thorough and robust – his ideas will reappear in later chapters of this thesis. The question is whether Trader’s approach ultimately requires cognitive therapy for any reason other than highlighting the deep insights on humanity from patristic sources. Is cognitive therapy simply restating in new terms what the Church Fathers said centuries ago, or is it providing a productive new

---

<sup>446</sup> Ibid, 259.

contribution to humanity's self-understanding? Trader's understanding of cognitive therapy as one of providing data which theology then interprets is one way of reconciling this, though it does not explain the deep resonances between cognitive therapy and patristic thought that he identifies.

An intriguing idea that emerges from Trader's analysis is that the patristic literature he cites could be understood as a sort of proto-psychology, or a psychological discipline with different methods from contemporary psychology. Indeed, he notes that the Church Fathers often developed their understanding of human nature based on empirical observations, a commitment to rationalism and human betterment, and a focus on self-study, analysis of thoughts, and behavioral modification – all of which are essentially tenets of contemporary psychotherapy's methodology.<sup>447</sup> Viewed in this light, the comparison in this book is actually between two different forms of psychology: one practiced in 20<sup>th</sup> century offices and labs, the other in late-antique and medieval churches and deserts. This would explain several of the deep harmonies between the claims of the two – they are coming to the same conclusions based on similar methods of studying the same objects, human persons – but then I question whether this is really a relationship between psychology and theology, or between an ostensibly secular psychology and a theologically-driven psychology. In both cases the methods are primarily empirical, rational, and discursive, and the objects of study are human beings: as such, the disciplines are not distinct in kind, but only in the details of approach. In any case, a clearer understanding of what theology is as a discipline is needed, such that theology can be distinguished from empirical or scientific disciplines conducted from a theological perspective, and it can be determined how theology differs in kind from scientific disciplines; I will elaborate on this shortly.

While Trader's approach asserts a deep unity and asymmetry between psychology and theology, his handling of their differentiation is less clear, likely due to the fact that he is relating them on a similar methodological plane: that of empirical observations of human rationality and behavior. In order to respect the differentiation between theology and psychology, one has to acknowledge that their respective methods as disciplines are very different, and that this contributes to their asymmetry. I will return to this idea below, but presently I will submit that this asymmetry of

---

<sup>447</sup> Ibid, 4.

methods actually provides a space for psychology to not be subsumed or superseded by theology in making claims about humanity, which is a risk in Trader's approach. When the methods are too similar, there is an urge to collapse or choose one or the other – when the methods are distinct, each can play its own role in fullness and integrity.

*Theology's Method: Alexei Nesteruk on Theology and Science*

To address this last point about the method of theology, and to further clarify how psychology and theology as disciplines can be related, I will examine the work of Alexei Nesteruk in his book *Light from the East: Theology, Science, and the Eastern Orthodox Tradition*.<sup>448</sup> Nesteruk's aim in this book is to draw on patristic insights as a way of reconciling truth claims between theology and science, creating a “‘new Patristic synthesis’ of theology and science.”<sup>449</sup> Nesteruk distinguishes between two different terms for theology: *theologia* (the apophatic, mystical, and revealed knowledge of God as experienced through faith within the Church) and *economia* (or economic theology). Economic theology is the verbal and written expression of what the Church believes throughout its history<sup>450</sup> – and thus, it is *economia* that is more readily related to science in academic discourse, as each makes affirmative claims about the world. However, *theologia* is the experience and knowledge of God himself, and thus is necessarily prior to *economia*, which describes God's actions in the world – as such, Nesteruk argues that economic theology must derive from the experiential and personal knowledge of *theologia*.<sup>451</sup>

This results in an inherent asymmetry between theology and science, because the latter's empirical and rational methods have their grounding in the work and being of God, the experience of whom is the method of theology. Caution must be taken, then, in what qualifies as theology – as noted above with Trader, observations of human behavior from a theologically-motivated perspective may simply be a type of psychology, not theology as such. For Nesteruk, theology has experience of God at its root, and thus it is inherently revealed and apophatic (understood as direct apprehension beyond all discursion).<sup>452</sup> This reveals the asymmetry

---

<sup>448</sup> Alexei Nesteruk, *Light from the East: Theology, Science, and the Eastern Orthodox Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

<sup>450</sup> *Ibid*, 55-7.

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid*, 56.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

between science and theology to be a difference of kind: theology's method is so vastly different from science's methods that issues of comparison need to be approached carefully.

Nesteruk address this further in his discussion as he claims that science, as carried out through rational thinking and by human abilities, is inherently limited and has an “epistemological horizon”<sup>453</sup> beyond which it has no effect or comment. *Theologia*, on the other hand, has an “open” epistemology, in that it can accommodate any number of schemes and systems for understanding the world, because its method is sourced in spiritual experience of God, the source of reality.<sup>454</sup> Nesteruk also recovers from patristic terminology the idea of *nous*, or “spiritual intellect,” as a separate faculty from reason (*dianoia*). While reason is rational, logical, and object oriented, spiritual intellect apprehends inner essences and divine realities through contemplation (which Nesteruk says could correspond to modern ideas of imagination and intuition). Nesteruk keeps these faculties separate, saying that advancement in the spiritual intellect is necessary for *theologia*, but advancement in reason is not (thus separating Orthodox Christianity from Gnosticism).<sup>455</sup> This is another ultimate horizon for discursive reason when attempting to comprehend reality – its objects are the empirical world and concepts, but not essences or the divine. This does not make science subordinate to theology in the sense of being made worthless or marginalized – as Nesteruk sees it, recognizing science's epistemological horizons preserve it as the discipline of investigating creation while also enabling it to be enlightened by the experience of theology.

This relationship between the open epistemology of theology and the limited epistemology of science strongly parallels the Chalcedonian Definition, lending a Christological character to Nesteruk's system as well. In Christ, the divine and human natures are kept separate, but they exist in a relationship of communion, with the human nature participating in the divine. Likewise, in Nesteruk's system, science studies the created order, but it is meant to participate in theology.<sup>456</sup> Nesteruk identifies the parallels between the God-world relationship and the theology-science relationship as ones of asymmetry and participation: he notes that, ultimately,

---

<sup>453</sup> Ibid, 72.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid, 71-2.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid, 27.

the world, though separate from God, finds its foundations in God's creative acts, thus providing a path for science to find its fulfillment in theology.<sup>457</sup>

This kind of approach to theology's method may seem to set it apart from other disciplines, or even seem like an attempt to restore its title as "queen of the sciences." However, I resist this appellation. As mentioned above, theology's relationship to psychology is not one of hierarchy, in which claims from psychology are abrogated or dismissed in deference to theological claims, because the claims are of a similar kind. Rather, the above analysis demonstrates that theology is different in kind from other disciplines, given its source in revelation from God, and thus makes claims of a different kind and which are non-competitive with scientific claims. To claim that science participates in theology is solely to claim that science finds its ultimate and eschatological meaning in the claims of theology, and not the other way around – and this is exactly the logic which Hunsinger's method and Nesteruk's ideas follow.

#### *Affirming Hunsinger's Christological Features*

Having assessed two contrasting methods to Hunsinger's of relating psychology and theology – Watts's and Trader's – and considered Nesteruk's thoughts on the methodology of theology, it is important to draw some preliminary conclusions before proceeding further. Both Watts and Trader construct methods that enable theology and psychology to influence the other, but both methods also elicit concerns about the integrity of theology as a method. Watts rejects Hunsinger's asymmetry for an equality between the two disciplines, but such a move risks putting psychological and theological claims in competition with one another, as well as potentially diminishing theology's claim to be grounded in experience and revelation of God. Trader embraces unity and order, yet his comparisons treat theology and psychology as two different empirical methods, which blurs the lines as to what qualifies as the discipline of theology. Nesteruk's clarification of the asymmetrical character of the methods of psychology and theology helps illustrate how theology and science are not simply equal disciplines in competition, but distinct disciplines with different kinds of methods: science is sourced in finite objects and abilities, while theology is sourced in God's revelation and interaction with humanity.

---

<sup>457</sup> Ibid, 103.

Thinking through this idea, it is helpful to restate Rowan Williams's idea of the non-competition between the finite and the infinite that Christology defines. It is the asymmetry between the finite and the infinite that also preserves their unlikeness, as well as their connection: if the finite and the infinite were two of a kind, they would occupy the same logical space, and thus one would exclude the other. However, since they do not, the infinite and the finite can co-exist, the finite drawing its being from its participation in the infinite. In the same way, the asymmetry between theology and psychology can be seen as a path to their non-competition: theology's vastly different, yet epistemologically-open, method does not exclude psychology's empirical, rational, and epistemologically-limited methods. Claims that are truly theological cannot *prima facie* exclude psychological claims, but rather investigation into their relationship can determine how the psychological can participate in the theological.

Essentially, Hunsinger's grounding of her features in traditional Chalcedonian Christology reveals how crucial Christology is to the understanding of reality, even to the point of understanding the relationship between disciplines of inquiry. Her features of unity, differentiation, and order, derived from the Chalcedonian Definition, are essential for understanding the relationship between theology and psychology in such a way that neither's methodological integrity is compromised. By not engaging with Hunsinger's Christological foundations for her approach, Watts and Trader do not carry over this important nuance that traditional theology affirms in Christ (the non-competition between his divinity and humanity) in their own explorations of theology and psychology.

As mentioned above, while Hunsinger's features clarify how psychology and theology can and cannot be related, this project seeks to go deeper by situating Hunsinger's features in a broader Christological context that allows for further investigations of psychological and theological anthropological issues as they arise. Essentially, my aim is to use Chalcedonian Christology, with guidance from Hunsinger's features, to define a method that can be applied proactively to new case studies, as will be done in the next two chapters. Given what has just been explained about Williams's idea of non-competition applied to theology and psychology, I submit that Hunsinger's three features actually map onto a participatory metaphysics of God and the world,

and that by characterizing the relationship of theology and psychology as one of participation, we can productively move forward in exploring how such participation occurs and is defined. As noted, the idea of participation in Christian theology has a grounding in Christology, in that participation characterizes the way Christ's humanity relates to his divinity. In the next section, I will examine the theological concept of participation through Andrew Davison's comprehensive work *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics*,<sup>458</sup> in order to identify how Hunsinger's features are indicative of an expansive theological tradition, from which I will draw to examine applications of psychology-theology engagement. I will also demonstrate the importance of personhood to the concept of participation by bringing back Nesteruk, and will argue that the essential unity between psychology and theology is grounded in the concept of personhood.

### **Participation and Personhood as Keys to the Psychology-Theology Relationship**

The theological concept of participation has been brought up a number of times in this thesis already. It was employed to characterize the relationship between the finite and infinite as presented by Rowan Williams, in that finite creation is said to participate in the divine infinite. Nesteruk argued for a relationship between theology and science in which science participates in theology. And Yannaras used participation as a way of understanding the knowledge gained through the sharing of energies: it is only through participation in the energies of another person that one can know a person. As such, participation is due for a more comprehensive treatment in this thesis of its applicability to the science-theology relationship, and particularly of its Christological grounding.

Participation is also receiving attention in the science-theology conversation more generally: as noted in the Introduction to this thesis, Sarah Lane Ritchie describes the theological turn in divine action conversations as having a participatory character. She writes that, "A full account of nature would necessarily include an account of God's active, immanent involvement in nature...for nature to be fully natural, it must be involved with, or participate in, God."<sup>459</sup> Seeing

---

<sup>458</sup> Andrew Davison, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

<sup>459</sup> Sarah Lane Ritchie, *Divine Action and the Human Mind*, 232.

scientific realities not as opposed to God, but rather inherently based in God's action, enables one to account for a participatory relationship between science and theology that respects both disciplines. The argument of this section, and ultimately of this chapter, is that the Chalcedonian features of Hunsinger – unity, differentiation, and order, which I have argued can simply be characterized as three aspects of asymmetry – define such a participatory understanding of reality, and thus point towards an understanding of psychology participating in theology.

*Andrew Davison on Participation*

Davison introduces participation as a concept integral to traditional theology, and to understanding the world in general:

Approaching the world in terms of sharing and receiving should be the bedrock of a Christian understanding of reality, and of Christian doctrine. That is the claim of this book. The heart of that perspective, which often goes by the name of 'participation', rests in perceiving all things in relation to God, not only as their source but also as their goal, and as the origin of all form and character. In that way, notions of likeness and exemplarity lie close at hand, and an inclination to celebrate the variegated particularity of things, as a creaturely expression of the goodness and beauty of God.<sup>460</sup>

Davison notes how participation features throughout the works of the Church Fathers, both Greek and Latin, and thus it is crucial to understand participation if one wishes to understand much of traditional Christian theology.<sup>461</sup> Participation emphasizes an inherent connection between creatures and God, but by the same token reinforces God and creation's incommensurability.<sup>462</sup> Both of these poles, for Davison, are encompassed by defining the relationship as asymmetrical: "to say that 'the world participates in God' both relates the world to God *and* stresses that God is utterly distinct from all that exists as creation, since the cause of all things cannot be another thing among things."<sup>463</sup> As Davison further elaborates using

---

<sup>460</sup> Davison, *Participation in God*, 1.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid*, 6-7.

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid*, 28-9.

Aristotelian categories, a participatory view of reality claims that creatures find in God their efficient cause, their formal cause, and their final cause (all stressing the unity and asymmetry between God and creation), but not their material cause<sup>464</sup> – hence differentiation is preserved along with an underlying unity and asymmetry.

This participatory understanding of reality has roots in Christology, as Davison notes, echoing Williams:

It was Christology – it was thinking about how creature and creator coincide in the one completely unique case of Christ, where there is perfect unity of divinity and humanity in the union of a Person – that opened the way for Christian theology to think more generally about the relation of divine action and creaturely action in a creative and non-competitive way.<sup>465</sup>

In Christ, all elements of humanity participate in divinity, meaning that everything human in Christ retains its complete integrity and identity while also being taken into divine life.<sup>466</sup> Davison notes how this relationship is asymmetric in Christ, as he is a divine person with no assumed human person (to use a patristic term, his humanity is *anhypostatic*) – but by realizing human nature as the person of the Son of God, Christ both preserves distinction between humanity and divinity (as divinity is not changed into humanity), while unifying human nature to himself, such that all humans can be “taken up” into divinity.<sup>467</sup> Davison also notes that relationship and growth are essential to humanity’s participation in God, and as such, the affirmation of Christ’s growth and development (such as in Luke 2:40) also affirms that Christ humanly participates in God. What this means is that Christology serves as full foundation for what it means to be truly and fully human in this participatory view of reality, as Christ exemplifies the essential human characteristic of growing and increasing their participation in God.<sup>468</sup>

---

<sup>464</sup> Ibid, 42-3.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid, 215.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid, 210.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid, 206.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid, 208.

Seeing participation through this Christological lens yields several implications for relating psychological and theological claims about humanity. For one thing, it enables one to use whatever knowledge we have about Christ as a template for how humanity ideally participates in God, and thus what the ultimate participating observable human looks like (Davison notes how Christ is “the exemplar of the forms present in creation”<sup>469</sup>). But even beyond that, the identification of non-competition between Christ’s humanity and divinity emphasizes the non-competition, and yet relatedness, of psychology and theology as asymmetrically related disciplines. Davison explains the use of analogy language to help clarify this idea: analogy is identification of likeness set against a yet-greater unlikeness. To say something is the “likeness” of another thing is to identify both an underlying unity and differentiation between the two things in the same breath – and, of course, since God is not just another thing, that inherent differentiation also carries asymmetry, in that things bear God’s likeness.<sup>470</sup> Davison elaborates:

We can use words to talk about God because of the participation of the world in God: whatever of excellence is in a creature was in God first, and the name we give to the trace of that excellence in creatures can be used to intimate that excellence in God... what is in God *divinely* is found, as a trace, in creatures in a *creaturely* way.<sup>471</sup>

To apply this to the relationship between psychology and theology, psychological claims can be related to theological claims by seeing traces of the theological in the psychological – to put it another way, we can observe certain concepts in humans in a psychological way, while understanding that the same concepts appear in theology but exemplified in a theological way. To relate them by analogy is not merely to say that one is similar to the other, but that there is an underlying connection between them in that what can be said psychologically in humanity participates in what can be said theologically. This idea should enable thinkers to find relationships that can be understood as truly integral to reality, as Davison writes:

---

<sup>469</sup> Ibid, 201.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid, 146-7.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid, 175-6.

A participatory thinker is likely to ground the capacity for imaginative correlation in the generative interconnectedness of all things, and see that as emerging from their common origin in God.<sup>472</sup>

What makes psychology particularly interesting to engage in this participatory view – and also more complicated – is the idea that there are degrees of likeness to God, and thus degrees of participation; a being can participate more or less in God.<sup>473</sup> This means that evil and sin, which are understood not to have substance of their own but to exist only as privations of good in a participatory scheme, do have the character of pulling an individual away from God, or participating less in him.<sup>474</sup> Psychological disciplines like developmental psychology and psychotherapy are concerned with how humans change, and thus their objects are dynamic – this corresponds to the idea that participation can occur in degrees, with humans participating either more or less in God. As such, caution needs to be applied, especially when looking at areas such as psychotherapy, when considering how psychological claims participate in theological claims, and what sorts of value judgments could possibly be applied to various psychological states.

However, as Davison notes, there is nothing that wholly does not participate in God: just as “an evil woman is still a human being,”<sup>475</sup> there is always some level in which persons can be seen as participating in God, by virtue of their very nature (in the *physis* sense). And as *physis* accounts for what is universal in humanity, it happens to be what sciences like psychology often aim to examine anyway. So while caution is needed in identifying what psychological participation in the theological looks like, such caution does not mean the endeavor is fundamentally flawed, or even significantly hampered. As far as we can identify characteristics that are essentially human, we can discuss a relationship of active participation between that which is psychological and that which is theological. Davison argues that “we should learn to apprehend all of reality, and all our experience, in relation to God: in God’s light, as revealing God, as God’s gift” – and that claim

---

<sup>472</sup> Ibid, 192.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid, 181.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid, 242.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid, 242.

underscores how a participatory view of reality enables a relationship between psychological and theological claims.

### *The Importance of Personhood to Participation*

There is one important piece remaining to add to this picture, and it is the role of personhood in the relationship between psychology and theology. The first three chapters of this thesis have identified personhood as an integral concept to understanding humanity, its relationship with God, and the God-world relationship at large – and in this section, the culminating discussion on theological personhood, I will argue that personhood has an essential role in being the unifying factor for psychology and theology in a participatory scheme – guaranteeing the “unity” essential to asymmetry – by returning to Nesteruk and his thoughts on the role of Christ’s singular hypostasis in relating God and the world.

As we saw in the last chapter, Nesteruk argues that Christ’s singular personhood is the key to understanding how God is present in the universe. For Nesteruk, this relationship is directly revealed by the Chalcedonian Definition: Christ’s singular hypostasis holds created humanity in the uncreated ground of divinity.<sup>476</sup> And this “hypostatic inherence” is the same, for Nesteruk, as saying created things participate in Christ’s person: they do not participate in God’s substance (as that would mean a material relationship, which is not true), but they participate according to Christ’s personhood.<sup>477</sup> In this way, Nesteruk affirms a panentheistic view of reality, but a panentheism of personhood, not substance; God is in all things and related to all things personally, through the personhood of Christ.<sup>478</sup>

This idea has ramifications for human personhood as well. As Nesteruk notes, personhood does not arise from the matter of the world (as we noted in Chapter 2), but rather it proceeds from divinity – creation as a whole is *anhypostatic* in and of itself. Our personhood, then, comes from our inherence in the person of Christ, who through his personhood bestows upon us the gift of knowing him as persons ourselves.<sup>479</sup> This hypostatic agency in humans, then, grants the world a

---

<sup>476</sup> Nesteruk, “The Universe as Hypostatic Inherence in the Logos of God: Panentheism in the Eastern Orthodox Perspective,” 181.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

hypostatic character through humanity, and thus God and the world can be related through human apprehension. Nesteruk can thus say that “humans are created as participants in the person of the Logos of God with the accomplished hypostases”<sup>480</sup> – or, in a longer summary:

Any panentheistic claim about the world which is brought to Godself must be understood in the context of human deification and involvement of the world in the transfiguration, which brings it back to the union with God. But all of this is initiated by the Logos of God, who created human beings with such logoi as to allow them to relate to God through personal interaction as well as through apprehension of his created universe.<sup>481</sup>

Drawing on this passage, it is possible to see how the unity of psychological and theological claims about humanity – as the disciplines which respectively study finite human properties and humanity’s relationship to God – is found in the phenomenon of personhood. Personhood provides the ground for understanding creation, albeit different from God and in an asymmetrical relationship, as ultimately being united to God. And following this, it can be said that psychology and theology both investigate this singular phenomenon of personhood: rather than simply saying that psychology and theology have entirely different objects of study, and can only thus be tangentially related, psychology and theology can be affirmed as approaching the same object of study, albeit through completely distinct and asymmetrical methods. This idea of a unified understanding of humanity is intuitive, as we do not usually think of the “scientific person” and the “theological person” – personhood generally implies unity. Nesteruk elsewhere says that there is an “undivided experience of personhood as communion with being and God,”<sup>482</sup> within which science and theology are two approaches. The unity of psychological and theological claims is thus found through the unified reality of personhood, which also happens to be the reality in Christ that unifies the whole infinite and the finite orders.

---

<sup>480</sup> Ibid, 180.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid, 176.

<sup>482</sup> Nesteruk, *Light from the East*, 74. This claim does not contradict Turner’s exploration of self-multiplicity, as seen in Ch. 2, as Turner’s claim is epistemological – our own self-conscious experience – while Nesteruk’s is ontological, about who we fundamentally *are*.

Bringing back the Christologically-grounded anthropology that was presented in Chapter 2 – in which humans should be understood dynamically as persons expressed through natural energies – we can see how psychology and theology both approach the singular reality of personhood, yet while remaining distinct and asymmetrical in their methods. While psychology, as a science, can only interact with and examine natural energies, natural energies express personhood, thus making personhood ultimately the object of psychology, if in an oblique way. And theology, which investigates humanity in relation to God, is methodologically a personal way of knowing – its apophatic and revealed character is inherently personal. As such, there is an asymmetry in this anthropological picture, but as all asymmetries discussed thus far it indicates a difference of kind – psychology *examines* personhood through examining the natural energies, while theology *experiences* personhood through relationality. The claims resulting from this theological experience, while obviously very differentiated from the claims resulting from psychological research, can thus find an essential unity with psychological claims through the understanding that they both pertain to a singular reality of personhood. As such, the participatory relationship between psychology and theology that has been advocated in this section must rely on personhood, as derived from Christ’s singular personhood, as the grounds of the relational unity between the two disciplines. The objects of psychology and theological anthropology are human persons – and it is in identifying this same object that highlights the importance of examining the disciplines’ relationship.

### *Participation between Disciplines*

This section has argued for a characterization of the relationship between psychology and theology as participation, as grounded in their asymmetrical relationship and on the metaphysics of participation and personhood from Davison and Nesteruk. One final point of clarification is whether it is truly possible to bridge Hunsinger’s Chalcedonian approach to relating psychology and theology as disciplines, to the participatory personal metaphysics exemplified by Davison, Nesteruk, and Williams. Is there precedent for applying the category of participation to disciplinary claims, and not simply objects and persons? I suggest so – first, Nesteruk’s assertion earlier that science must participate in theology due to their asymmetrical epistemological horizons substantiates such a move. However, this is not particular to Nesteruk: the founders of

the “Radical Orthodoxy” movement also make such a move, arguing that finite disciplines must also participate in theology:

The central theological framework of radical orthodoxy is ‘participation’ as developed by Plato and reworked by Christianity, because any alternative configuration perforce reserves a territory independent of God. The latter can lead only to nihilism (though in different guises). Participation, however, refuses any reserve of created territory, while allowing finite things their own integrity. Underpinning the present essays, therefore, is the idea that every discipline must be framed by a theological perspective; otherwise these disciplines will define a zone apart from God, grounded literally in nothing. Although it might seem that to treat of diverse worldly phenomena such as language, knowledge, the body, aesthetic experience, political community, friendship, etc., apart from God is to safeguard their worldliness, in fact, to the contrary, it is to make even this worldliness dissolve.<sup>483</sup>

We see in this quote a rationale for making participation applicable to disciplines as well as objects and persons: to not do so is to ground activities of human enquiry as somehow separable from God, which, from a traditional theological perspective, is not possible. And following the logic of participatory metaphysics, the authors also claim that such a view preserves the integrity of finite disciplines, as otherwise their claims to existence would dissolve. To relate psychology with theology is thus not to endanger psychological claims and methods, but to ground them and give them their significance and meaning. This is a strong opinion, but one that can be justified from the above discussion, at least insofar as it claims that the realities psychology investigates are part of God’s creation and depend on God for their existence – psychological claims therefore participate in theological claims. An even stronger way to read this quote is that psychology cannot be properly conducted without an explicit recognition of its theological groundings and the priority of God – as much psychological research is conducted without

---

<sup>483</sup> John Milbank, Graham Ward, and Catherine Pickstock, “Introduction: Suspending the material: the turn of radical orthodoxy,” in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, 1-20 (London: Routledge, 1999), 3.

reference to theology, this claim would seem *prima facie* false, unless it then claimed that all non-theological psychological research was suspect, which is a position this chapter rejects. The differentiation between the methods of psychology and theology ensures that psychological research can occur without explicit reference to theological methods; the unity this chapter desires is found in the common ontological ground the two disciplines' claims find in God. A participatory relationship does not mean that theology abrogates or rejects psychological claims, nor does it imply that such claims are meaningless without explicit recognition of such a relationship, but it does mean that psychological claims are given a framework in which the claims can provide insight on ultimate meaning and being.

To give a more historical example, Knut Alfsvåg argues that Nicholas Cusanus held to a similar understanding on the relationship between knowledge of the divine and knowledge of finite creation, claiming that understanding the finite can make sense only when measured by our understanding of the infinite.<sup>484</sup> This may seem like an odd statement (how do we understand the infinite at all?), but Alfsvåg argues that Cusanus gives it a Christological character, in that it is through Christ that we see the relationship of the infinite with the finite.<sup>485</sup> Alfsvåg writes:

Bypassing the example of Christ and insisting on our ability to distinguish appropriately between the infinite and its manifestations on our own is, in Cusanus's view, to short-circuit the problem of the unknowability of the infinite. Neglecting the story of the manifestation of the infinite in the realm of the finite and still insisting on being able to solve the problem of how this can be realized is, for Cusanus, a position that does not make sense.<sup>486</sup>

Alfsvåg continues to make this connection in Cusanus's thought between the Christological revelation of the infinite-finite relationship with our disciplinary knowledge of the infinite and finite, and settles upon a relationship between theology and science that is participatory:

---

<sup>484</sup> Knut Alfsvåg, "Unknowability and Incarnation: Creation and Christology as Philosophy of Science in the Work of Nicholas Cusanus," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 21,2 (2019):144.

<sup>485</sup> *Ibid*, 146.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid*, 146.

Both because the Creator has appeared as a human, and because the ultimate realization of the human nature is given through its participation in God, knowledge has for Cusanus ultimately a christological (sic) foundation, and is for that reason holistic and liturgical. The relation between the divine and the human in Christ is impenetrable and insoluble. It is thus given as the unescapable point of orientation for an epistemology that defends the reality of an approximation that is not reducible to either relativism or univocity. To conflate truth and science is to confuse the infinite and the finite, to succumb to relativism is to separate them. In this way, Chalcedonian Christology holds even as the model for the adequate exploration of the world.<sup>487</sup>

Finite knowledge then, Alfsvåg argues, is actually given an integrity of its own through its Christological participation in the ultimate truth of God. While human knowledge will never be complete or wholly objective, it is grounded in truth by virtue of its participation in God. The way to relate the finite and infinite – psychological claims and theological claims, in this case – is thus found in Chalcedonian Christology. Drawing on the work of Alfsvåg, Nesteruk, and the founders of Radical Orthodoxy, I submit that there is sufficient substantiation to see a participatory relationship between psychology and theology as disciplines. I also submit that this relationship is a way to preserve the integrity of both disciplines, and to yield a definable Christological method in relating psychological and theological claims productively.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that Hunsinger's three features of a Chalcedonian Christological approach to relating psychology and theology – unity, differentiation, and order, all encompassed in the term “asymmetry” – point us to a participatory understanding of this relationship unified in the phenomenon of personhood. The Christological character of this method is important for achieving the appropriate balance for relating psychology and theology while preserving the integrity of each. A proper understanding of the method of theology, especially of the asymmetrical relationship between psychology and theology, and its Christological foundations

---

<sup>487</sup> Ibid, 153.

actually guarantees the respecting of both psychology and theology as disciplines. Rather than seeing psychology and theology as making competitive claims about humanity, this chapter has established the non-competition between theology and psychology, such that human phenomena can be affirmed as both fully psychological and fully theological. By showing how this Christologically-informed approach exemplifies the deep theological tradition of participation, this chapter aims to open a space for productive engagements of psychology and theology based on the idea of participation. This chapter thus leads directly into the third part of this thesis – “Christ as End” – in which applications of relating psychological and theological claims are presented, with Christology informing the way that purpose, objective, and value are ascribed and related by both disciplines. The methodological approach developed in this chapter will be applied to these applications – the applications shall thus see psychological claims and theological claims as related through asymmetric participation.

### **PART 3: CHRIST AS END**

The next two chapters provide two constructive applications of my Chalcedonian Christological method for relating theology and psychology with respect to understanding humanity. These application chapters thus comprise Part 3 of this thesis – “Christ as End” – in which Christology is used to shape our understanding of humanity’s *telos*, or purpose. Taking Christ as the vision for human destiny, the end of all of our growth and efforts, gives these engagements between theology and psychology an object of consideration: to state it as a question, how do psychology and theology understand humanity’s purpose, and how do these two understandings inform one another?

Both psychology and theology could be characterized as disciplines concerned with the *telos* of humanity. For theology, this is not a controversial claim: the notion that humanity’s destiny is new life in Christ, conformed to his image and likeness, is commonplace in traditional theology, one of the key messages of Christian witness and preaching, and as such is a highly relevant theological concept to relate with psychology. Psychology, however, to the extent which it professes to be an empirical discipline, would not appeal to any intrinsic moral or supernatural purpose in its descriptions of humanity. Nevertheless, psychology is not immune to value judgments: labels such as “typical” and “atypical” development may be qualified as mostly descriptive, but still carry an implicit judgment on the nature of human development. Likewise, the practice of psychotherapy aims for human wellness, with certain states demarcated as in need of healing and change – this explicitly calls for a vision of what a psychologically healthy human looks like. As such, psychology is not wholly removed from speaking in teleological terms, and it is this tendency which enables psychology to engage with theology on the question of human purpose.

These next two chapters engage with two Christological concepts that inform the *telos* of humanity in traditional theology: becoming a child of God, and being crucified with Christ. Both of these concepts are seen as salvific in Christian theology, but both also provide an important perspective on how Christ informs the *telos* of the Christian believer. Both of these ideas as well can be seen as Christological understandings of the *imago Dei* from a specifically revealed perspective: image as child, and image as conforming to Christ crucified. By making Christology

foremost in discussing the purpose of humanity, these specific Christological interpretations of the *imago Dei* come into sharper focus, and I submit that they function as clearer and more workable interpretations of the image of God than the typical categories of substantive, functional, and relational explored in Chapter 1. They are also interpretations that invite engagement with other disciplines, as these next two chapters will demonstrate.

In these next chapters, I bring in theories of childhood developmental psychology and practices of empirical psychotherapy to relate with the notions of becoming a child of God and being crucified with Christ, respectively. Each of these application chapters is structured as a response to a certain question or tension in scholarly literature, in line with having the two disciplines approach a shared problem. Thus, Chapter 5 addresses the question: “how or to what extent are little children exemplary for salvation?” while Chapter 6 addresses the question: “what is the significance of Christ crucified for a person’s ideal mental state?” As theological literature often does not answer these questions satisfactorily, these two chapters will employ my Christological method to construct a science-theology answer to these questions, drawing on both psychological and theological sources. My argument is that identifying a relationship of participation between theories of developmental psychology and becoming a child of God, and between empirical psychotherapies and being crucified with Christ, will yield much more thorough and satisfactory answers to these questions.

To hone the theological scope of the discussion, I approach becoming a child of God with Rowan Williams’s notion of “filiation,” and I approach being crucified with Christ through Khaled Anatolios’s notion of “doxological contrition.” Both of these theological notions characterize Christian salvation, but both also have a psychological emphasis on the Christian’s mental state inherent within them, and thus are apt for engagement with psychological claims. By arguing in each chapter for a relationship of participation between the relevant psychological claims and the respective theological notion, as per my Christological method, I aim to show how specific psychological and theological claims about humanity’s *telos* function in unity, even if that unity is couched in an inherent asymmetry between the psychological and theological. Moreover, I argue that both the relevant theological claims and psychological practices can be strengthened by identifying the underlying relationship of participation between them.

## Chapter 5: Application 1 – Christological Filiation and Childhood Developmental Psychology

### Introduction

The application of my Chalcedonian Christological method in this chapter aims to engage developmental psychology's theories and claims about childhood with the traditional theological notion of "filiation," or relating to God as children in the manner that Christ relates to the Father. Both of these ideas appeal to a teleological understanding of humanity: developmental psychology aims to examine how a child grows, learns, and forms relationships in a healthy way, while filiation characterizes humanity's ultimate salvation through the embracing of a certain way of life. Their approaches and objects, however, are quite different. "Filiation" develops from the personal revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, particularly witnessed to in the scriptures (such as Romans 8) and employed as a concept by traditional theology – the precise term "filiation" is used by Rowan Williams, and his thought will largely guide my analysis of the concept. Developmental psychology employs empirical observations and experiments in order to isolate various capacities and behaviors in humans at various stages of life. While it is not definitionally concerned with children, and does extend its disciplinary reach to the whole human lifespan, the vast majority of developmental psychological research is on pre-adolescent children.<sup>488</sup> And for the purposes of this chapter, it is the claims and theories about young children that will be engaged with the theological idea of filiation.

I make this decision for two reasons. First, there is a tradition in theology of seeing young children as exemplars for Christian life, and this tradition, while appealing and theologically creative, can be critiqued for not engaging with the reality of children as they are. The evidence gained for such theological reflection is largely anecdotal, as opposed to more rigorous empirical study and reflection. This chapter can thus be seen as responding to this tradition by engaging with developmental psychological research on young children. The other reason, and the more crucial one, is that the insights from developmental psychology on young children have strong correlations with theological insights about how humans can participate in filiation. As such,

---

<sup>488</sup> H. Rudolph Schaffer, *Key Concepts in Developmental Psychology* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2006), 6-7.

following the method outlined in the previous chapter, I argue that filiation and childhood developmental psychology have a relationship of participation, in which the claims and theories of childhood developmental psychology participate in the theological reality of filiation. Recalling Hunsinger's Chalcedonian features, this asymmetrical participatory relationship is thus one of unity (centered on the dynamic experience of the human person), differentiation (in that developmental psychology and theology have very different kinds of methods and claims), and order (in that developmental psychology finds its ultimate significance and foundations in filiation).

One could explain this approach as relating two distinct ways of understanding what it means to be a child. For psychology, to be a child is to be a young human being. Within an understanding of theological filiation, to be a child is to relate to God as Christ relates to the Father. While these are obviously two differentiated understandings of what it means to be a child, accessible by two different disciplinary methods, this chapter will argue that they are related. In fact, seeing this relationship as participatory reveals that this is an asymmetrical relationship (the two understandings of what it means to be a child are different not just in claim but in kind, such that one could derive its being from the other), and that they also are unified in the sense that the understanding of childhood evoked by both is part of the singular reality of human personhood. Understanding the phenomenon of human childhood as participating in the theological end of filiation reveals how both psychology and theology can approach this Christological perspective of human purpose.

To narrow the scope of this application, I will examine two areas of childhood developmental psychology: attachment theory and theories of cognitive development. These are two of developmental psychology's most active and studied areas, and they both have particular opportunities to engage with traditional theology in its focus on Christ as Son and Logos. This chapter first examines some background material on theology's emphasis on becoming like a child, the strengths and weaknesses of that emphasis, and how Christology offers a productive path forward. Then, the first main section of analysis in the chapter examines attachment theory, and the extent to which the relationship between a child and its parents participates in the Son of God's relationship to the Father. The second analysis section examines major theories of

cognitive development, and the extent to which they too participate in filiation by the acquisition of the “mind of Christ.”

### **Background: Theology of Childhood**

Before bringing in psychological research to investigate the phenomenon of childhood from a science-theology perspective, I first want to highlight common theological approaches to childhood, so as to provide some background as to why I chose childhood as a subject pertinent to applying my Christological method. Scholars who discuss children and theology tend to draw inspiration from Jesus’ teachings on children, such as “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”<sup>489</sup> In recent decades, many scholars have attempted to take a fresh look at the meaning of childhood and the significance of children to theology, with books such as *The Child in Christian Thought* by Marcia Bunge<sup>490</sup> and *Children and the Theologians* by Jerome Berryman.<sup>491</sup> The journal *Theology Today* released an issue in 2000 featuring 12 articles discussing the topic of children from a variety of perspectives,<sup>492</sup> and there is even a Child Theology Movement growing in certain academic circles.<sup>493</sup> These theologians who discuss children approach the topic from many perspectives, including pastoral recommendations, cultural reactions, and how childhood theology relates to other theologies, such as feminist or liberation theologies.

One particular vein of scholarship, however, argues that Jesus’ sayings about children, as recorded in the Gospels, imply children hold certain characteristics that should be emulated by adults and that are essential to Christian living.<sup>494</sup> Some examples of these characteristics that are proffered by these theologians include vulnerability, openness, neediness and immediacy (living

---

<sup>489</sup> Luke 18:16-17, NRSV.

<sup>490</sup> *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001).

<sup>491</sup> Jerome W Berryman, *Children and the Theologians: Clearing the Way for Grace* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2009).

<sup>492</sup> *Theology Today* 56,4 (2000)

<sup>493</sup> Vivienne Mountain, “Four links between Child Theology and children’s spirituality” *International Journal of Children’s Spirituality*, 16,3 (2011): 262-3.

<sup>494</sup> Judith M. Gundry-Volf, “‘To such as these belongs the reign of God’: Jesus and Children” *Theology Today* 56,4 (2000): 469-480.

in the moment);<sup>495</sup> living in a relationship and living in creativity;<sup>496</sup> having divine insight;<sup>497</sup> and learning in a way that is better suited to knowing God than the way adults learn.<sup>498</sup> Essentially, Christ's command that to enter the kingdom one must "change and become like children"<sup>499</sup> becomes a starting point for reflection on how exemplary qualities of children are qualities of the kingdom, and thus Christians should look to children as exemplars of Christian living.

While there is much to appreciate about these theological attempts to focus on early childhood and its peculiarities, there are also several issues with these approaches. First, these characteristics often appear to be based on an idealized conception of children, rather than actual, living children, who often do not display such exemplary behavior for adults, which make the aforementioned scholarly arguments look baseless or unrealistic. While some works do address psychological research,<sup>500</sup> which could provide evidence based on the experience of actual children, childhood psychology is rarely an overall concern of the work. Second, these childlike characteristics rarely lead into any in-depth or nuanced pragmatic prescriptions for adult living. For example, take the claim that children have divine insight:<sup>501</sup> aside from the ambiguity of the claim itself, because it is underdeveloped and unclear how children have divine insight or how a Christian could change their life to acquire said divine insight, the claim is not very useful to those seeking inspiration from Jesus' commands to become like little children. A third pertinent issue is that biblical scholarship does not have a consensus view on what Jesus' quotes about children mean: for example, some argue that children were of low social status, and Jesus is using them as a model to reinforce his teachings on the poor. Others argue that to "receive the kingdom as a child" means one must show hospitality and charity to children, but is not about

---

<sup>495</sup> Adrian Thatcher, "Theology and Children: Towards a Theology of Childhood," *Transformation* 23,4 (2006): 197.

<sup>496</sup> Vivienne Mountain, "Four links between Child Theology and children's spirituality," 263.

<sup>497</sup> Judith M. Gundry-Volf, "'To such as these belongs the reign of God': Jesus and Children," 479.

<sup>498</sup> Jerome W. Berryman, *Children and the Theologians*, 17.

<sup>499</sup> Matthew 18:3, NRSV.

<sup>500</sup> See Vivienne Mountain, "Four links between Child Theology and children's spirituality," 264-5. Also, Iris V. Cully, *Christian Child Development* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1980) makes use of theories of developmental psychology, but this is a strictly pastoral work for religiously educating children, and does not engage with any theologically exemplary "childlike" traits.

<sup>501</sup> Judith M. Gundry-Volf, "'To such as these belongs the reign of God': Jesus and Children," 479.

childlike qualities as such.<sup>502</sup> Such ambiguities in the Gospel quotes undermine their ability to, on their own, provide a solid foundation for theological celebrations of childlikeness.

This is where taking a Christological approach is helpful: rather than beginning with Christ's teachings on children, other scholars start from Christ's life in which he was born as a child and exemplified what it means to be a child of God. When enquiring about what it means to be a child, and the relevance of being a child for theology, the natural place to start is with Christ, as he defines what it is to be a child. Linking the phenomenon of young children with Christ's exemplification of childhood is a move made by Vigen Guroian, in an essay on childhood,<sup>503</sup> and the importance of being a child of God is emphasized by Rowan Williams in his discussion of "filiation."<sup>504</sup>

#### *Vigen Guroian on Christ as Child*

The scriptural accounts of Christ's infancy and childhood in the scriptures have relevance for theological discussions of humanity, and especially childhood. Indeed, the method that Christ took for humanity's salvation involved a full immersion into the life of humanity – a complete self-identification of God with humanity. As we noted in Chapter 2, traditional theology placed profound importance on the idea that Christ grew and developed, as exemplified in the passage from Luke: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature."<sup>505</sup> As John Meyendorff notes, traditional theology held, against opposition, that these scriptural passages necessitate the understanding that Christ developed, was ignorant of certain facts, and needed to learn.<sup>506</sup> This idea of growth as being essential to the life of Christ is highlighted by Guroian: "Inasmuch as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity assumed our humanity completely and grew as we grow from embryo to adult, God in Christ has revealed something special about the economy of salvation."<sup>507</sup> Just as Christ grew as a child, so must we grow as a child, and thus development

---

<sup>502</sup> See discussion in Gundry-Volf. "Jesus and Children," 469-480.

<sup>503</sup> Vigen Guroian, *The Orthodox Reality: Culture, Theology, and Ethics in the Modern World*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 159-177.

<sup>504</sup> Rowan Williams, *Looking East in Winter*, 95.

<sup>505</sup> Luke 2:52, NKJV.

<sup>506</sup> Meyendorff, "New Life in Christ: Salvation in Orthodox Theology," 494.

<sup>507</sup> Guroian, *The Orthodox Reality*, 162.

plays a role in salvation – developmental psychology, therefore, is apt for engagement in discussions of humanity’s purpose.

But even beyond considering Christ’s life as a young child, Guroian argues that Christ best exemplifies what it means to be a child in all stages of his life – indeed, this is to be found in His relationship with God the Father.<sup>508</sup> Guroian argues that childhood, as a relationship, has always belonged to the divine being, as it is an essential part of the identity of the Son of God – even before his virgin birth, Christ related to the Father as his Son, and thus childhood has divine origins.<sup>509</sup> Our childhood, then, and our roles as children are divine gifts from a God who is Son.<sup>510</sup> Parenthood is such a gift as well, coming from God who is Father, but Guroian argues that childhood is more spiritually important than parenthood – in fact, for him it is the most spiritually important relationship overall. He argues that the Incarnation is the first evidence of this, as Christ shows us what perfection is through his being an exemplary child of his Father. In addition, while not every human is a parent, every human is a child – childhood is thus a role that is universally proper to humanity. Finally, while childhood is never abandoned – we will always be someone’s child – parenthood and adulthood will be relinquished to the Father after our earthly lives, and we shall all be his children in eternity.<sup>511</sup> In other words, whether we remain little children or not, being a child is what all humans are and what all humans are destined to be.

The question is then how little children meaningfully relate to this truth. Guroian makes the claim that it is when we are little children that we learn how to take up the role of child.<sup>512</sup> Guroian’s claim inextricably ties the role of child of God with the phenomenon of young childhood: he then follows that “biological, chronological childhood is both preparation for and symbol of the office of child of God, a spiritual, transtemporal childhood.”<sup>513</sup> As such, he argues

---

<sup>508</sup> Guroian, *The Orthodox Reality*, 160.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>513</sup> *Ibid.*, 174. In this way, Guroian’s argument resists the accusation that he is conflating childhood as a developmental stage, and childhood as a relationship: after all, are not adults who have grown beyond their childhood years still children of their parents? But what Guroian’s logic leads to is that the relationship of childhood is one whose content is most fully lived and expressed by young children, especially (as we will see) in dependence and obedience. In a very real sense, even though strictly-speaking I am still a child of my parents, I do not wholly fulfill such a role of being their child anymore – I have grown to be far more like an adult peer in many ways. I am

that adults should see little children as guides in leading them towards this spiritual childhood; even those who are no longer wholly innocent are still steeped in the role of childhood in a way that adults are no longer.<sup>514</sup> Guroian enjoins believers to remember that childhood is more akin to the kingdom of heaven than “spoiled” adulthood is<sup>515</sup> – we should not conflate natural growth with spiritual growth. Our purpose can thus be explained as to become more and more like children as we progress in our spiritual lives.

It should be noted that Guroian does not see children as universally idyllic, or claim that natural growth is inherently bad. He makes the point that not every child possesses the virtues of the kingdom of heaven in an exemplary fashion, but rather that children possess these virtues in a sort of seed-like state, and still must grow into perfection.<sup>516</sup> Hence, this emphasis on childlikeness is not mutually exclusive with the above emphasis on development as spiritually important. Guroian argues that maturation into responsible adults is what we should desire of ourselves and children, and indeed, it is impossible by our own powers to become literal young children again.<sup>517</sup> But importantly, “real human maturity is the rebirth of innocence”<sup>518</sup> – maturation is not about chronology, but our participation in spiritual life, specifically in our cultivation of the virtues of childhood.<sup>519</sup> Guroian lists these virtues as “humility, simplicity,

---

no longer fully participating in the role of child in that relationship. This is why starting with Christ as the ideal child is so important: throughout his life, he does fulfill the role of being a child of God the Father, from his infancy through his adulthood, such that his life is always informed by that relationship of dependence, simplicity, and obedience. So to see little children, as a developmental stage, as participating in becoming a child of God, as a relationship, is not conflating two different usages of the term child – rather, by looking to Christ to understand what childhood is, we can affirm this claim of Guroian’s that “biological, chronological childhood is both preparation for and symbol of the office of child of God, a spiritual, transtemporal childhood.”

<sup>514</sup> Ibid, 175.

<sup>515</sup> Ibid, 176. Some may question whether Guroian can feasibly make this claim, given the impact of the Fall and original sin even on young children. However, Guroian follows the tradition of much of the Christian East in rejecting any conceptions of original sin as “inherited guilt,” such as in an Augustinian vein. Rather, Guroian writes that “the Orthodox tradition believe that although all human beings are born into a sinful world, all at the start are also free from actual sin and do not carry the guilt of Adam. Infants, therefore, are innocents... All human beings develop the habit of sin and may accumulate personal guilt as they experience life. Young children, however, are in a real sense more like what all Christians must become than are adults. Christians must become spiritual children” (Ibid, 173). In this way, Guroian manages to more forcefully make the link between young childhood and Christ’s being the child of God, as there is not an unmovable obstacle of inherited guilt to interrupt the connection. As such a conception of the Fall is fairly normative in the Eastern tradition, this thesis follows Guroian in understanding early childhood as in some ways less affected by sin than adulthood.

<sup>516</sup> Guroian, *The Orthodox Reality*, 165-6.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid, 175-6.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid, 175.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid, 175-6.

unaffected love, trust, and obedience” and argues that “Christ exercised these virtues through the whole of his life.”<sup>520</sup> As Christ is the child *exemplar*, these virtues are considered by Guroian to be proper to childhood, and enjoined upon all who wish to be children once more.<sup>521</sup>

Guroian could thus be accused of falling into the same overgeneralization that the above child theology scholars do, in naming “childlike” virtues that children supposedly exemplify. However, even if we strip away the specific enjoining of childlike virtues from Guroian’s argument, his point remains that little children fully inhabit the role of relating to their parents as child, and therefore looking to children can inform us in some way as to how to become a child of God. If “biological, chronological childhood is both preparation for and symbol of the office of child of God,” then Guroian’s essay thus provides a pathway for connecting the phenomenon of young childhood with the salvific reality of becoming a child of God, and does so by putting Christology at the center of this relationship.

#### *Rowan Williams on Filiation*

The crucial importance of this Christological emphasis on childhood is captured in Rowan Williams’s idea of “filiation,” or relating to God the Father as his child.<sup>522</sup> Williams argues that “the entire direction of classical Christian theology is defined by the basic conviction that we are adopted into the relation that Jesus enjoys with the Father”<sup>523</sup>— any talk of salvation or deification must be grounded in this essential relationship. And to be in Christ necessitates being as a child; elsewhere Williams writes, “We identify what is to be a child of God, given a share in the liberty of God, and identify in Jesus the formal, the material, and the efficient cause of there being such a pattern in human lives.”<sup>524</sup> For Williams, we cannot understand what it is to be truly human, much less what it means to be a child, without first looking to Jesus.

Williams argues that all other theological expressions of Christian living stem from the idea of filiation. In a passage worth quoting in full, he writes about two understandings of Christian life

---

<sup>520</sup> Ibid, 162.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid, 162; 165.

<sup>522</sup> Williams, *Looking East in Winter*, 95.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid, 71-2.

<sup>524</sup> Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 25.

– one as becoming children of God, and the other as living a disciplined, ascetic life to subdue the passions and imitate the divine nature:

In the context of the New Testament, any disjunction between the two approaches is pretty artificial, since sharing in Christ’s relation to the Father is manifestly and explicitly the ground of transformed behaviour and a new mind. However, as Christian reflection developed, the idea of reflecting the kind of life lived by God, immortal, stable and free of passion, drew more and more deeply on available models of such transformation in the intellectual world of late antiquity, and the connection with the basic theme of filiation is sometimes hard to discern. The undeniable difference in focus between emphasizing relation to the Father and emphasizing our accession to a certain ‘interior’ or ‘spiritual’ state becomes ever more marked. And so in Christian history these two emphases, which we might call ‘filiation’ and ‘purification’, constantly drift apart, recombine, are redefined and reworked; it is the positive tension between them that gives the doctrine its significance, as we shall see, but that positive tension needs to be repeatedly refreshed by new theological strategies.<sup>525</sup>

Williams thus sets out to refresh this tension by emphasizing how the filial relationship between Christ and the Father – the relationship humans must also acquire – is the basis for such traditional conceptions of holy living. To understand filiation properly is to see it not just as imitating Christ, but as “a comprehensive re-framing or reconfiguring of a finite life in relation to God.”<sup>526</sup> Williams emphasizes that the relationship between the believer and God is not the same as a relation between two individuals – there is an asymmetry at play here, the same asymmetry that Williams identifies between the finite and the infinite.<sup>527</sup> The theological understanding of becoming a child of God is something other than being a human child – and yet the analogical language between them is significant. In identifying an asymmetry between the two types of relationships, the differentiation is evident, but it also points towards an inherent unity. This

---

<sup>525</sup> Williams, *Looking East in Winter*, 94-5.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid*, 95.

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid*, 95-6.

Christological idea of filiation is apt for approaching with our Christological method of participation.

Thus, I propose that the empirical, psychological phenomenon of being a child can exist in a relationship of participation with this Christological idea of filiation – and thus observations from developmental psychology can be said to participate in filiation. The rest of this chapter will examine two ways, from two subject areas of developmental psychology, that such a relationship can be identified: first through engagement with attachment theory, and second through engagement with theories of cognitive development.

### **Attachment Theory and Personal Relationships**

The earliest part of human life, newborn infancy, is marked by a complete dependence on the caregiver for food, comfort, and protection. As the infant grows, its relationship with its caregiver becomes paramount for its development of a sense of trust in its relationships, in its environment, and in itself.<sup>528</sup> Attachment theory studies how the relationship formed between a child and its caregiver(s), usually the child's parents, shapes both the child's behavior in its early years and throughout its later life. An attachment is “a deep-seated emotional tie that one individual forms with another, binding them together in space and enduring over time”<sup>529</sup> – thus, attachment theory is primarily concerned with how children develop attachments to their caregivers.

In addressing such issues theologically, one may be tempted to relate attachment to love – however, attachment is a subtly more technical term, psychologically, than love is. Mitchell and Ziegler note how it is difficult to identify precisely what love is from an empirical psychological perspective, yet it is obviously important for forming and maintaining long-term relationships.<sup>530</sup> Theologically, love is a key Christian concept, and there has been much ink spilled on the importance of love, even though it is often just as definitionally ambiguous from theological

---

<sup>528</sup> Cully, *Christian Child Development*, 3-4.

<sup>529</sup> H. Rudolph Schaffer, *Key Concepts in Developmental Psychology*, 161.

<sup>530</sup> Peter Mitchell and Fenja Ziegler, *Fundamentals of Developmental Psychology*, Second Edition. (New York: Psychology Press, 2013), 235-6.

perspectives. As such, I submit that engaging with the specific psychological concept of attachment, and not bringing more general discussions of “love” into the picture, will actually be more useful of an enterprise. Attachment, as it refers to the relating of a child to its caregiver, is much more specifically akin to theological ideas such as trust and dependence – and it is these more tailored theological ideas that are also more easily relatable to the empirical research done on child-caregiver relationships.

In this section, I will demonstrate how research on attachment theory yields evidence for a participatory relationship between attachment theory and Christological filiation: the forming of attachment relationships with caregivers, while distinct from becoming a child of God, is nevertheless a process in an asymmetrical, personal unity with humanity’s ultimate goal of filiation.

#### *Attachment Theory: the Importance of Secure Attachment*

In discussing attachment theory’s status in psychological research,<sup>531</sup> H. Rudolph Schaffer notes:

There is no doubting the enormous influence that attachment theory has come to exert not only on developmental psychology but on psychology generally. Its immediate aim was to shed light on the nature of children's primary relationships; however, in doing so it also provided new insights into the psychological make-up of human beings generally and their functioning in the real world.<sup>532</sup>

Essentially, attachment theory has helped psychologists understand how the formation of key relationships affects nearly every part of a person’s disposition and behavior. A key figure in the development of attachment theory is John Bowlby, who saw attachment as a biologically innate

---

<sup>531</sup> As theories of attachment and cognitive development have become solidified as subjects of discussion, debate, and further investigation in the field, I use primarily secondary scholarship in this chapter to give a synthetic view of each theory, rather than constructing them anew from the primary scholarship of Bowlby, Piaget, Vygotsky, and others. As each of these psychologists expanded and changed their theories over many individual studies and books, using previously-made syntheses by secondary textbooks enables more productive and straightforward engagement. By using a few different secondary sources, I aim to give a wider perspective as to how these theories have been interpreted and used in the field.

<sup>532</sup> H. Rudolph Schaffer, *Key Concepts in Developmental Psychology*, 164.

process in infants.<sup>533</sup> Bowlby saw how newborn animals seemed to have an instinctive attachment to their mothers, and argued that newborn babies must have a similar mechanism for attaching to their mothers for safety and security.<sup>534</sup> Bowlby thus challenged the view, common at his time, that personal relationships were “secondary drives:” children’s “primary drives” were seen as things like hunger, thirst, and pain, and personal relationships develop secondarily as the result of caregivers relieving the tensions from these primary drives.<sup>535</sup> In this view, children love their mothers, or caregivers, because they could provide the children with food, drink, and shelter.<sup>536</sup> Bowlby argued, however, that the need to form relationships with caregivers was an evolutionary, primary phenomenon.<sup>537</sup>

In arguing for his view, Bowlby drew on landmark research of Rhesus monkey infants by Harry Harlow. Harlow’s research showed that when given the choice between a wire imitation of a mother monkey that dispensed milk, and a cloth-covered imitation of a mother monkey without food, the infant monkeys predominantly sought the cloth-covered imitation. They would briefly feed with the wire monkey, but then immediately return to the cloth-covered one, seemingly preferring the comfort of the touch. Thus, Harlow argued that comfort and warmth must be an essential part of animal attachment.<sup>538</sup> Bowlby built on this research to argue that children form attachment bonds with their mothers for connection and relationships, not only because of sustenance. His research was so influential that the practice of orphanages has now been largely replaced with the foster care system in many places, and children are no longer widely separated from their parents in hospitals.<sup>539</sup>

Bowlby argued that a “secure” attachment base – meaning having an emotionally strong attachment to the mother – increases a child’s willingness to explore, and helps lead the child through more psychologically healthy development.<sup>540</sup> Secure attachments were highlighted in

---

<sup>533</sup> Carol Brown, *Developmental Psychology*, (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2008), 112.

<sup>534</sup> Margaret Harris and Gert Westermann, *A Student’s Guide to Developmental Psychology* (New York: Psychology Press, 2015), 33.

<sup>535</sup> Schaffer, *Key Concepts*, 162.

<sup>536</sup> George Butterworth and Margaret Harris, *Principles of Developmental Psychology* (Hove, UK: Psychology Press Ltd, 2003), 24.

<sup>537</sup> Schaffer, *Key Concepts*, 162.

<sup>538</sup> Brown, *Developmental Psychology*, 113.

<sup>539</sup> Harris and Westermann, *A Students Guide*, 34.

<sup>540</sup> Butterworth and Harris, *Principles of Developmental Psychology*, 26-7.

Mary Ainsworth's "strange situation" experiment as preferable to other types of attachments that could result between child and parent. Ainsworth tested how children reacted when, at various times, their mothers would leave the room and a stranger would enter. Some children seemed calm when the mother was with them, nervous and upset when the stranger entered, and then returned to their mother and were consoled when she returned. Ainsworth dubbed these children "secure" in their attachment, as she argued they trusted their mothers and saw them as a place of safety. She also postulated that these mothers likely were consistently engaged with their children.

However, Ainsworth also identified two types of "insecure" attachments among the children she observed. In the first of these, children paid little to no attention to the mother, the stranger, or the mother when she returned, without any preferences between them. Ainsworth dubbed these children "detached/avoidant" in their attachment – she argued that perhaps they did not have a strong connection with their mothers, and that these mothers were likely disengaged with raising their children. In the other type, some children became very upset when their mothers left, and were inconsolable even upon her return, only increasing in upset. Ainsworth dubbed these children "resistant/ambivalent" in their attachment, noting that they seemed to be very easily distressed by any lack of mother, and that her return did not help. Ainsworth suggested that these mothers likely were inconsistent or unreliable in their engagement with raising their children, meaning the children did not know what to expect. Researchers since Ainsworth have identified a third type of insecure attachment dubbed "disorganized/disoriented," in which children exhibit contradictory behaviours and seem dazed and confused throughout the experiment. It is postulated that it is likely that these children's parents were either abusive or had some form of trauma in their lives.<sup>541</sup>

Ainsworth's experiment has been lauded for showing the influence of parenting styles on the development of childhood attachment – and her attachment patterns are enormously influential<sup>542</sup> – though it has also been criticized for not accounting for cultural and lifestyle variance in typical

---

<sup>541</sup> Helen L. Bee and Denise Roberts Boyd, *The Developing Child*, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition. (Boston: Pearson, 2007), 311-3.

<sup>542</sup> Schaffer, *Key Concepts*, 164.

mother-child contact time.<sup>543</sup> However, the key takeaway from Ainsworth's experiment for our purposes is the marked difference in child behavior for those with "secure" attachments versus those with "insecure" attachments. As mentioned earlier, a secure attachment is not only seen as evidence of a good relationship, but is also seen as important for a child's willingness to explore, play, and relate to others while remaining connected to its caregiver base. Mitchell and Ziegler note that "the baby seems to treat the mother as a safe base from which to venture into an unfamiliar environment"<sup>544</sup> – and this is seen as healthy for development, as the child can grow and engage with the world within the context of a strong caregiver relationship. In contrast, children with insecure attachments either are unable to explore and engage with their surroundings, or are detached and disconnected from their caregiver (which is a problem both for childhood safety and for the development of healthy relationships).

Bowlby saw secure attachments working like a control system, responding to the environment and adjusting due to feedback – basically, attachments constantly monitor variables such as the proximity of the mother, or her availability, and then trigger behaviors to return the system to the status quo when needed (such as when the mother disappears, and the infant begins to cry and scream for her).<sup>545</sup> This enables the child to deliberately plan their behavior towards achieving goals and interacting with their environment, all while building a relationship with their caregiver – a "goal corrected partnership" – in which the child can understand the goals of the caregiver, and the two partners can adjust to each other.<sup>546</sup> Bowlby also argued for a "critical period" (the first 2.5 years of life) in which an infant must form an attachment with its caregiver, or else attachment will never occur at all. Further psychological research has criticized the stark nature of this idea, and has instead suggested that the first 2.5 years of life are a "sensitive period," in which attachments are ideally formed for the benefit of the child, but failure to do so does not preclude later life attachment formation.<sup>547</sup> As such, more current research on attachment theory does not have an exclusive focus on infants (though infant research

---

<sup>543</sup> Schaffer, *Key Concepts*, 165. For example, the distributions of attachment patterns in Japanese children are different than those in the West. Likewise, children raised largely in day cares react differently to the experiment than children who are raised largely at home.

<sup>544</sup> Mitchell and Ziegler, *Fundamentals*, 239.

<sup>545</sup> Schaffer, *Key Concepts*, 163.

<sup>546</sup> *Ibid*, 163.

<sup>547</sup> Brown, *Developmental Psychology*, 113.

predominates), and more research is being done on the importance of attachment relationships in older children and adults.<sup>548</sup>

In analyzing these fundamentals of attachment theory, it is notable how value-laden it is, in that secure attachments are determined to be developmentally healthy, and are thus advised as the goal for parenting. As mentioned in my introduction, the fact that both developmental psychology and theology have values and goals makes their engagement more tractable, not less – indeed, rather than seeing psychology and theology as having different goals that must be contradictory, we can employ our method to see the goals of psychology and theology as existing in a relationship of participation. The development of a secure attachment relationship, in which a child retains its dependence on its caregiver and yet is enlivened to explore and play, is a distinct process from the salvation through spiritual adoption as specified in Christological filiation, but there are clear parallels between the two processes. In the next section, I will highlight aspects of Christological filiation that suggest a relationship of participation with the development of secure attachments.

#### *Filiation as Dependence and Trust in God*

It should be stated at the outset of this section that the relationship between God the Father and Jesus Christ – and by extension, the relationship between the Father and all other humans hoping to receive adoption as sons of God – is not the exact same type of relationship as that between a parent and child. Rowan Williams, in emphasizing the otherness of God, writes that “an orientation towards filiation in simple terms will risk making relation to God a case of relation to others – here am I and there is the God I call ‘Father’ – leaving the self’s habits intact and untransformed.”<sup>549</sup> One does not have a relationship with God as individual to other individual, because God is *non aliud*, or “not another thing” – thus, our relationship with God is not another relationship.<sup>550</sup>

---

<sup>548</sup> Schaffer, *Key Concepts*, 167.

<sup>549</sup> Williams, *Looking East in Winter*, 97.

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid*, 96. Williams explains this in a delightfully self-aware way, writing: “If our encounter with God the Father is encounter with the trinitarian *non aliud*, then the otherness between myself and God is – to offer a hopelessly but unavoidably clumsy formulation – ‘other’ to all other forms of otherness.” (96)

However, that does not mean that there is no comparison to be made: after all, the names revealed for the hypostases of originating divinity and receptive divinity in the Trinity are “Father” and “Son.” Contrary to Williams’s reservations about comparing child-parent relationships with filiation, David Bentley Hart argues for making just such a connection:

The Father’s love of the Son may be likened proportionately to a human parent’s love for a child not simply as a convenient anthropomorphic fiction, but because creation is a real participatory expression of that eternal love that is always being born in the Father’s giving of the Son, the Son’s response to the Father, the witness and rejoicing of the Spirit. In every case, though, exemplarist or otherwise, analogy remains a “disjunctive synthesis” ...which reconciles precisely by preserving the distance between the things reconciled.<sup>551</sup>

What both Hart and Williams are appealing to, with differing emphases, is the asymmetrical relationship between speaking about the created and the uncreated, and the inherent differentiation and unity that are implied with such an asymmetry, which we have been exploring in our Christological method. While Williams cautions about the excesses of failing to recognize the differentiation, Hart emphasizes the importance and appropriateness of upholding the unity of the created and uncreated, found in creation’s participation in God – as such, child-parent relationships can be said to participate in the relationship between the Father and the Son. And as Hart also emphasizes, it is because of Jesus Christ that this analogical language works: as Logos and measure of all things, who assumed human form, Christ enables analogy to move beyond shapeless abstractions to actually grasping the underlying reality of all things.<sup>552</sup> Williams acknowledges such an underlying relationship when he writes that “Creation’s relation to God...is grounded in the Son’s relation to the Father”<sup>553</sup> – the distinction between the two relationships does not erase their fundamental unity, in that the former draws its very existence from the latter.

---

<sup>551</sup> David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, 310.

<sup>552</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>553</sup> Rowan Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation*, 221.

The relationship between child and parent is thus highly relevant to the idea of filiation, insofar as insight into that relationship can be said to reveal truths about the analogous relationship of being a child of God. To explore this analogy further, let us draw on the above ideas of what it means to have a secure attachment for developmental psychologists. The essential elements of a secure attachment are a dynamic and self-regulating control system by which the child ensures a strong dependence on its caregiver, and the child's drawing on that strong dependence to pursue a self-motivated life of exploration, play, and goal achievement. Having a secure attachment also enables the child to align its goals with that of its caregiver, again in a dynamic system, and thus develop a strong, personal and loving relationship with that caregiver. Conversely, an insecure attachment in a child results in the child neglecting either the control system of partnership with its caregiver, or its own ability to achieve goals through exploration, play, and other self-directed activity. Essentially, having a stable and strong relationship with the caregiver is essential for a child's security and self-discovery.

Here, there are clear parallels with the relationship between the Christian believer and God. One key aspect of humanity's relationship with God in Christ is that of dependence. Williams calls the Word "the eternal form of dependence," which is then the "ground and the optimal form of all dependent finite reality."<sup>554</sup> Just as the Son of God draws his being from the Father eternally, so also does creation draw its being from the Father – hence, for Williams, the incarnation is the embodiment of the divine mode of receptivity and response in the contingent order which must also respond to God.<sup>555</sup> Seen in this way, dependence on God is not merely an ideal preference, or a choice among many: it is an ontological reality, and one which is not meant to be transcended, but affirmed in our own salvation in Christ. Williams writes that Jesus Christ is God *as dependent*,<sup>556</sup> meaning that he enables us to share divinity in its mode as responsive, obedient creativity.

Williams notes that humans tend to resist dependence, either because of our desire for total self-determination or of our fear of diseased relationships of authority. However, ultimately the only

---

<sup>554</sup> Ibid, 221.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid, 220.

<sup>556</sup> Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology*, 140.

way to overcome dependence is through dependence – not through accumulating dependence on transient relationships like to things or institutions, but through recognizing our fundamental dependence on everything around us.<sup>557</sup> As noted in our Christological anthropology in Chapter 2, humans are dynamic and interconnected systems – we cannot consider ourselves in isolation from the world around us. Who we are is shaped by the relationships we have, and thus Williams argues that we must lay side illusions of independence and embrace our status as dependent beings through an act of trust.<sup>558</sup> And of course, as our ultimate dependence is on God, Williams argues for an understanding of creation as the grounds of our trust in God:

To say, ‘I exist (along with the whole of my environment) at God’s will, I am unconditionally dependent upon God’ means – at least – the following things. My existence in the world, *including* my need to imagine this as personal, active and giving, is ‘of God’; my search for an identity is something rooted in God’s freedom, which grounds the sheer thereness of the shared world I stand in. And to see that is *already* to have the need answered: my needful searching is part of what God gratuitously brings to be.<sup>559</sup>

One could say that Williams’s quote here is approaching an idea of having a secure attachment to God: recognizing God as one’s secure base, engaging with the world around you through that security and not in spite of it, and constructing an identity through constant relationship and partnership with God in the process. To acknowledge one’s dependence is to reject ideas of ego, possession, and accumulation that create the illusion of independence, and to relate to God personally – not as “the fantasy of the substantive individual over against God and other subjects,”<sup>560</sup> but as truly personal, as a divine mode of open and total response to God, just as Christ is.<sup>561</sup> This discussion inevitably calls to mind kenosis: Christ rejected power and advantage in his earthly life to truly embody dependence on God, and so Williams can claim that a “person realizes the divine image precisely by abandoning the aspiration to be like God.”<sup>562</sup>

---

<sup>557</sup> Ibid, 69-70.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid, 72.

<sup>560</sup> Williams, *Looking East in Winter*, 99.

<sup>561</sup> Ibid, 98-9.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid, 125.

Seeing these theological ideas through the lens of secure attachment helps illuminate the non-contradiction between freedom and dependence. If, as is often assumed, freedom necessitates independence, then the theological language of filiation can seem confusing and contradictory, as it is clear that it is only through ultimate dependence on God that a person can achieve their true goal, of life in Christ as a child of God. However, seen through the example of the infant securely attached to its mother, it becomes clear that true freedom and the achievement of one's goals can only emerge within a context of total dependence. To quote Williams again:

‘Dependence’ here is a liberation from private fantasy and egotistic struggle, and signifies not a reduction or weakening of the reality of finite being in its distinctive embodiments, but an establishing of this on the only firm ontological ground it can have, which is the divine invitation.<sup>563</sup>

In order for a child to grow into its full potential – to explore, play, and achieve goals with the aim of constructing its identity – in the most healthy and productive manner, it must have a secure attachment to its caregiver, according to attachment theory. Far from limiting or stifling the child's creative impulses and relationships, secure attachments have been observed to enable creativity and relationships. Likewise, it is only in acknowledging one's total dependence on God that one can truly exist in this world as who one is called to be: a child of God, in Christ.

#### *Attachments to God in Psychology of Religion*

What I have argued for thus far is how the psychological phenomenon of attachment, as exemplified in young children's relating to their caregivers, participates in the Christological relationship of filiation between the believer and God – and I have shown that certain features of attachment relationships have parallels with the way Williams describes filiation. More recent psychological research into attachment has investigated whether the believer-God relationship can be understood as an attachment relationship – in this section, I argue that this research largely reinforces the above discussion by demonstrating, from empirical psychological research, evidence for the formation of attachment relationships to God. This research mixes the

---

<sup>563</sup> Ibid, 129.

discourses of psychology and theology a little, given that the concept of God is included in the scope of empirical investigation; however, this research, while engaging with theological ideas, is firmly psychological research, as its primary object is how human beings relate and form attachments (with the attachment figure in this case happening to be God, or at least the believer's conception of God). Such psychological research can still speak to the notion that attachment relationships participate in the salvific reality of filiation, as there is non-competition inherent in the concept of participation: the forming of attachments and filiation, while differentiated realities, do not exclude each other, as there is one person both forming attachment relationships and entering into a salvific relationship. As such, while this psychological research is not concerned with salvation *per se*, its affirmation of the possibility of attaching to God strengthens this chapter's argument of a relationship of participation between attachment and filiation, as we have described the psychological aspects of filiation above as forming a secure attachment with God.

Watts describes research into attachment relationships with God as “one of the most fruitful developments in the psychology of religion in recent years,”<sup>564</sup> as it explores how children's relationships with parents often have a strong influence on their approach to religion. Watts notes that human attachment relationships act as predictors for a believer's relationship to God, and that God is at least analogously like an attachment figure – God is not directly observable or physically locatable, though religious traditions do emphasize ways in which God can be perceived as present or absent.<sup>565</sup> To this end, Pehr Granqvist has argued that the relationships believers form with God are attachment relationships, and that God can thus be called an attachment figure. He and Lee A. Kirkpatrick write: “We argue, using Ainsworth's (1985) and Bowlby's (1969/1982) criteria for distinguishing attachments from other types of relationships, that these resemblances are more than interesting analogies and in fact reflect genuine attachment processes.”<sup>566</sup> To defend this argument, Granqvist marshals a number of characteristics of attachment figures, and demonstrates how God fits such a description.

---

<sup>564</sup> Fraser Watts, *Psychology, Spirituality, and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 114.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>566</sup> Pehr Granqvist and Lee A. Kirkpatrick, “Attachment and Religious Representation and Behavior,” in *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*, Third Edition, ed. Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver (New York: The Guilford Press, 2016), 919.

God, Granqvist writes, is seen as a parental figure who is stronger and wiser than the believer,<sup>567</sup> and with whom the believer can enter into a loving relationship.<sup>568</sup> Granqvist argues that attachment to God is an “asymmetrical”<sup>569</sup> relationship, and thus more like the parent-child relationship than a romantic or friendship relationship.<sup>570</sup> In this relationship, proximity between the believer and God is crucial, and distress responses ensue when the believer and God are distanced.<sup>571</sup> While it is true, as noted above, that God is not present or absent in terms of physical proximity, Granqvist *et al.* argue that religions provide many means, from visiting sacred places to singing and engaging in prayer, to concretize the notion of God’s active presence for the believer.<sup>572</sup> God acts as a safe haven for the believer in times of crises, illness, or personal loss.<sup>573</sup> And God provides a secure base from which the believer can explore and grow – as Granqvist notes, an omnipresent, omniscience and omnipotent figure can provide the “most secure of secure bases.”<sup>574</sup> By observing these classic attachment characteristics in empirical psychological research on religious believers, Granqvist comes to the conclusion that the believer-God relationship *is* an attachment relationship.

This does not mean it is exactly the same kind of attachment relationship as is formed between young children and caregivers, however. As Watts notes above, God is not physically present for the believer, as a parent is physically present for a child. Hence, Granqvist calls God a “noncorporeal attachment figure,”<sup>575</sup> so as to distinguish attachment relationships with God from

---

<sup>567</sup> Pehr Granqvist, *Attachment in Religion and Spirituality: A Wider View* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2020), 61. Granqvist draws much of his research on Christian believers and from Christian sources, but he notes that what he says about “God” could also apply to other supernatural attachment figures, such as Jesus or Krishna, albeit with different nuances in each case. The following discussion will continue to use “God,” as the Christian God is who Granqvist primarily uses, and with whom this chapter is ultimately concerned.

<sup>568</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-7.

<sup>569</sup> Granqvist uses the word asymmetry here with a different connotation than the way this thesis has been using the concept of metaphysical asymmetry, though the two ideas have resonance.

<sup>570</sup> Pehr Granqvist, “Attachment and Religiosity in Adolescence: Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Evaluations” *PSPB* 28,2 (2002): 267.

<sup>571</sup> Granqvist, *Attachment in Religion and Spirituality*, 49-51.

<sup>572</sup> Pehr Granqvist, Mario Mikulincer, and Phillip R. Shaver, “Religion as Attachment: Normative Processes and Individual Differences” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14,1 (2010): 51.

<sup>573</sup> Granqvist, *Attachment in Religion and Spirituality*, 54.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*, 66. Granqvist notes that he has experimented with other words – “symbolic,” “attachment-like,” or “imaginary” – but has rejected each of them. “Imaginary” can be misunderstood as non-existent, “attachment-like” is vague and blunts the force of his argument (that it is a real attachment relationship), and “symbolic” makes it sound

caregiver attachment relationships. He also recognizes that God is best viewed neither as a mother or father figure – as most believers seem to view God either as possessing both stereotypically paternal and maternal traits, or as beyond such a distinction entirely – and so calls God an “exalted attachment figure.”<sup>576</sup> In making these caveats, Granqvist is attempting to reconcile the fact that God is a qualitatively different figure than human parents, and his argument that the relationship formed with God can still be identified as a proper attachment relationship. I support Granqvist by noting that he is working across the asymmetry between the finite and the infinite: the same relationship, that of attachment, is being expressed between finite caregivers and an infinite God, but then those attachments are going to have a different character due to the qualitative, or analogous (in a metaphysical sense), difference in their attachment figures.

Granqvist’s work focuses mostly on adult believers, and on their established attachment relationships with God – however, more relevant to this chapter’s focus on young children, Granqvist sees early childhood as a crucial moment in the formation of attachment relationships to God:

I argued that infancy through toddlerhood is a preresligious and prespiritual phase of development, which is nonetheless of unparalleled importance for what is later to emerge as religious and spiritual development. The preschool period (early childhood) was portrayed as a key developmental period in which religiously and spiritually colored ideas and experiences may begin to flourish, including a “living” representation of a God that ultimately often comes to trump other imaginary figures in children’s lives.<sup>577</sup>

The notion that infancy and toddler are “preresligious” does not provide evidence against this chapter’s exploration of whether children exemplify qualities worthy of Christian emulation – of course infants do not have a developed sense of Christian religiosity. Rather, Granqvist’s

---

as though God is a stand-in for something else. “Noncorporeal” expresses the reality that God is not present in a physical body, but then does not overextend in its exclusion (Ibid, 352).

<sup>576</sup> Ibid, 47-8.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid, 92.

argument affirms that it is as infants and toddlers when children develop the mechanisms of attachment that will be essential for later developing that attachment to God. And likewise, Granqvist argues that early childhood is a time when God becomes a living figure in children's lives. Putting these two periods together, as Granqvist does, makes a strong connection between the secure attachments formed in young children and later life religiosity – Granqvist *et al.* write:

Substantial empirical support has been obtained for the idea that the developmental pathway to religion for individuals who are secure with respect to attachment runs through extensive experience with sensitive, religious caregivers and leads to the development of a security-enhancing image of a loving God.<sup>578</sup>

Now, it is important to note that religiosity, or even a perceived relationship of secure attachment with God, is not the same thing as salvation – the former are empirical, psychologically-observable realities, while the latter is a theological reality. The first part of this chapter has argued for a participatory relationship between attachment and the salvific notion of filiation. Granqvist, as a psychologist of religion, does not discuss or explore salvation, as such a concept is not in the purview of his discourse – however, his conclusions on the relationships between childhood attachments to caregivers and adult attachments to God are still illuminating and useful for this chapter's purposes. The strong connections between secure attachments with caregivers and a perceived secure attachment with God certainly give support to the idea that childhood attachment could participate in filiation.

And even when children do not have secure attachments, the importance of attachment more generally in Granqvist's work on the experience of religion is still central. Much of Granqvist's research focuses on two hypothesized pathways for how childhood attachments result in adult religiosity. The "Correspondence Pathway" claims that children securely attached to religious parents will adopt their parents' religious standards in adulthood, as implied by much of the above discussion.<sup>579</sup> The "Compensation Pathway," on the other hand, claims that children who

---

<sup>578</sup> Granqvist *et. al* "Religion as Attachment," 56.

<sup>579</sup> Granqvist, *Attachment in Religion and Spirituality*, 123.

are insecure with regard to attachments may turn to God as a surrogate attachment figure.<sup>580</sup> Granqvist argues that insecure attachments are actually developmentally defensive strategies, which develop secondarily in lieu of obtaining sufficiently sensitive care from the primary attachment figure (the child's caregiver) – in times of distress or turmoil in adulthood, then, these defensive strategies may crumble, and the person may once again seek the primary strategy of a secure attachment figure, whom they find in God.<sup>581</sup> While these paths stem from opposite childhood circumstances, Watts notes that both are paths by which people reach attachment to God.<sup>582</sup> Either way, both paths emphasize the importance in the person's search for a secure attachment as a primary drive – and the fact that both result in attachment to God, despite different beginnings, is strong evidence both for God as an attachment figure, and for attachment mechanisms as being crucial towards forming a relationship with God.

Overall, this review of recent research in psychology of religion lends support to the importance of attachment mechanisms, as formed and developed in young childhood, towards forming and developing a relationship with God. As Granqvist and Kirkpatrick argue, “The attachment components of believers' perceived relations with God are far from surface aspects of religion but are instead central components of it.”<sup>583</sup> While this research cannot discuss notions of salvation directly – such as filiation – the experiential reality of a securely attached relationship with God accords with what I have identified above as the psychological reality which participates in filiation. As such, the argument that young children's attachment capabilities participate in the soteriological reality of filiation, while not proven by demonstrating the importance of young children's attachment relationships with caregivers to later attachment relationships with God, is at least given stronger empirical support.

### *Concluding Thoughts on Attachment and Filiation*

In this analysis of attachment theory and filiation, I propose that secure attachment and filiation exist in a relationship of participation: they are distinct concepts, yet they testify to an underlying unity between them that exists in the fundamental asymmetry between the created and uncreated.

---

<sup>580</sup> Ibid, 154.

<sup>581</sup> Ibid, 164.

<sup>582</sup> Watts, *Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality*, 116.

<sup>583</sup> Granqvist and Kirkpatrick, “Attachment and Religious Representation and Behavior,” 934.

The divine reality of the Son's relating to the Father, into which all humans are called, is revealed in the cultivation of secure attachment relationships between children and their caregivers. As mentioned in the introduction to this section, one could speak of these relationships in terms of love, yet attachment is a more technical term and, as I hope to have demonstrated, has more immediate and tangibly specific comparison points. Secure attachment is not just about love (though love is certainly relevant to it), but is primarily about a dynamic, self-regulating relationship between child and parent, in which the child is enabled to explore, grow, and play while developing a partnered focus in goal achievement with the caregiver. The theological ideas of trust and dependence are thus more apt in relating to attachment, but even so it is important to draw out the nuances that attachment brings to these terms. The dependence and trust of a child in a secure attachment are not only not contradictory to the effecting of that child's identity and achieving its goals, but are in fact the very grounds of those processes. Dependence and divine freedom turn out to be two sides of the same coin.

As such, we should understand the ideal human-God relationship in an analogous manner to the way we understand a securely attached child-parent relationship – and in fact, as the above psychology of religion research argues, we can identify the psychologically-experienced aspect of both relationships as attachment. It is through recognizing our dependence upon God that we are enabled to shape our identity and achieve our goals, to become truly personal and divinely creative. If, as mentioned earlier, a secure attachment is a dynamic and self-regulating control system, then we need to attend to and nurture whatever analogous system within us engages with God. As proximity is essential to secure attachment, so should proximity to God be made essential in our spiritual lives, whether in prayer or in sacred spaces as Granqvist notes – by cultivating a relationship in this way, we can attend better to the goals of God, and develop a “goal corrected partnership” with him. Neglecting this essential dependence, and rather cultivating the illusion of independence, will either cut us off from God and to our knowledge of his purposes and goals for us (while opening us to dangers), or stunt our ability to grow in our personhood and cultivate strong and necessary relationships. As mentioned earlier, while we are ultimately dependent on God, we are also temporally dependent on everything in our environment. We cannot exist as independent, and so rather than struggling to become so, we must learn to practice dependence as a mode of existence – which, as we have explained, means

being in Christ's mode of existence. Attachment mechanisms, as we saw with the Correspondence and Compensation Pathways to adult religiosity, are primary drives which underlie our behaviors and can lead us to God; understanding these drives as participating in filiation enables us to discern the salvific significance of attachment relationships. Recognizing a participatory relationship between secure attachment and filiation means that we should look to children as exemplars of Christian living – not for any naïve or idyllic reasons about children's moral superiority, but because children who develop secure attachments to their caregivers are, in a very real manner, embodying a divine mode of existence.

### **Cognitive Development and the Mind of Christ**

Maria Montessori, in constructing her famous Montessori method, argued that the work of a child is fundamentally different from the work of an adult: while adults work to accomplish an external change in their environment, children work to make an internal change in their own selves. Children focus on using the environment around them to change and perfect themselves, while adults work to externally change and perfect the environment around them.<sup>584</sup> This claim, while perhaps a bit of an oversimplification, does speak to a fundamental conviction of much of cognitive developmental psychological research: that children understand and engage with the world in a qualitatively different manner than do adults.<sup>585</sup> And, this section will argue, this claim about a distinctive childlike approach to relating to the environment has a deep theological character as well.

Cognitive development can be distinguished from learning in that development is concerned with changes over time in *how* humans learn and engage with their surroundings, while learning is more concerned with the *what* information and skills humans actually acquire through their experiences.<sup>586</sup> Butterworth and Harris note that, for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, developmental psychology was concerned with “grand, all-encompassing theories” that attempted to explicate

---

<sup>584</sup> Brendan Hyde, “Montessori and Jerome W. Berryman: work, play, religious education and the art of using the Christian language system,” *British Journal of Religious Education* 33,3 (2011): 343-4.

<sup>585</sup> Harris and Westermann, *A Student's Guide*, 28.

<sup>586</sup> Philip David Zelazo, “Developmental Psychology: A New Synthesis,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Developmental Psychology, Vol. 1: Body and Mind*, ed. by Philip David Zelazo, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 6-7.

how this *how* of human development occurred, though in contemporary times these explorations have largely given way to more “circumscribed, detailed” investigations of very specific developmental phenomena.<sup>587</sup> Cognitive development is especially indicative of this phenomenon, as the theories of thinkers like Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky have exerted considerable influence – such that their ideas of cognitive development can take up the majority of space in discussions about developmental psychology more broadly – yet much of the contemporary research tends to eschew overarching theories for individual case studies.

For the purposes of this chapter, however, we will consider those theories of cognitive development rather than a collection of circumscribed, contemporary studies. There are many reasons for this, foremost of which is that translating from individual psychological studies to engagements with theological ideas is near impossible, especially given issues of validity and the “replication crisis” in psychology.<sup>588</sup> J. Steven Reznick also argues that contemporary developmental psychology lacks a “cumulative character” – the ability for the field’s research to cumulatively build on previous research – which other scientific fields, like astronomy or molecular biology, demonstrate in their widespread scientific consensus and advancement.<sup>589</sup> He writes: “The quantity of developmental research is certainly impressive, but the quality is less impressive, particularly as indicated by the lack of accumulated consensual understanding of specific developmental phenomena.”<sup>590</sup> However, the grand theories of development are still discussed, drawn on, and debated, even if much of the field’s specific research is non-cumulative, circumscribed case studies, and so these theories still possess a certain degree of currency within the field of cognitive development. As such, while bearing in mind that there is no single “correct” theory of development,<sup>591</sup> this section will engage with a few different prominent theories of cognitive development and the potential for identifying a participatory relationship with filiation. As will become clear, the particular differences between the theories

---

<sup>587</sup> Harris and Butterworth, *Principles*, 14.

<sup>588</sup> For a more detailed account of this, see Stuart Ritchie, *Science Fictions: How Fraud, Bias, Negligence, and Hype Undermine the Search for Truth* (New York, Metropolitan Books, 2020).

<sup>589</sup> J. Steven Reznick, “Research Design and Methods: Toward a Cumulative Developmental Science,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Developmental Psychology, Vol. 1: Body and Mind*, ed. by Philip David Zelazo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 36.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid*, 57.

<sup>591</sup> Harris and Butterworth, *Principles*, ix.

are less of a concern to this engagement than the inherent commonalities in their approaches concerning how children develop cognitively.

An inherent *telos* or value-laden goal is less obviously found in cognitive development than it is in attachment theory – and indeed, some scholars have resisted the notions of general norms for evaluating development, as the identification of “healthy” or “typical” starting states, end states, and progressions seem to allow too much influence from societal or cultural values.<sup>592</sup> However, I argue that *telos* can still be found across the theories of cognitive development, but not necessarily in terms of an ideal end stage for growth. Rather, I argue that the purpose of cognitive development, especially in the early years, is for children to more accurately and productively engage with their environment – hence my introduction of Montessori’s insight at the outset of this section. In the analysis that follows, I will argue that the various theories of cognitive development all point towards this basic insight, and then that this goal of cognitive development exists in a relationship of participation with a key part of filiation that Williams identifies as acquiring a “filial” or “Christomorphic” mind<sup>593</sup> – what other theologians might call “the mind of Christ.”<sup>594</sup>

### *Piaget, Vygotsky and Theories of Cognitive Development*

The most prominent and influential name in cognitive development is Jean Piaget – indeed, while much of his research has been challenged by later psychologists, his core ideas have remained influential, and much current research either builds on or responds to his work.<sup>595</sup> Erica Burman notes that Piaget’s influence has been so profound in structuring the discipline that it is largely invisible in certain ways<sup>596</sup> – Piaget’s ideas underlie much of the field’s assumptions and debates. However, there has more recently been a rise of interest in Lev Vygotsky’s ideas, especially in the ways they contrast with Piaget’s theory.<sup>597</sup> The cultural-historical character of Vygotsky’s approach seems to provide more nuance and contextuality to the discipline than

---

<sup>592</sup> Erica Burman, *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology* (Hove, East Sussex: Routledge, 2008), 291.

<sup>593</sup> Williams, *Looking East in Winter*, 72;75.

<sup>594</sup> For example, see in Alexis Trader, *Ancient Christian Wisdom and Aaron Beck’s Cognitive Therapy: A Meeting of Minds*, 17; also in John Anthony McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture* (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2011), 91-2.

<sup>595</sup> Butterworth and Harris, *Principles*, 15-16.

<sup>596</sup> Burman, *Deconstructing*, 243.

<sup>597</sup> *Ibid*, 241.

Piaget's more individualistic, science-focused approach. However, while neither Piaget's nor Vygotsky's theory has definitive support over the other in the psychological community, it can be argued that their theoretical differences reveal different emphases surrounding a similar understanding of cognitive development.<sup>598</sup> Let us examine each of their theories in more detail, while afterwards also mentioning other theories of cognitive development that have traction in psychological research, so as to draw out the commonalities and contrasts.

Piaget's theory, generally known as "constructivism," emphasizes children's active involvement in their learning environment, and thus in their own development.<sup>599</sup> Constructivism claims that "the mind actively participates in assembling knowledge of the world in the process of interacting with the environment, rather than passively acquiring such knowledge through direct perception."<sup>600</sup> Such a view makes children agents of their own development: their knowledge is not simply copies of reality, or passively acquired, but rather is of their own construction made through struggling with the world around them.<sup>601</sup> This contrasts with earlier influential ideas of children as needing total determination from their education, such as John Locke's *tabula rasa*, which emphasized the environment's role in forming the child over any agency of the child's own.<sup>602</sup> Burman argues that Piaget's ideas countered both environmental determinist positions (such as the *tabula rasa* or behaviorism), and genetic determinist positions (essentially the opposite position, that everything in the child's development is innately determined) – constructivism, by contrast, emphasizes the interaction between the child and its environment.<sup>603</sup>

Other key aspects of Piaget's theory include the idea that children's thinking is qualitatively different from that of adults (rather than it being just a deficient or lesser form of adult thinking), and the idea that children's thinking changes at different ages. Piaget takes this to describe different stages of cognitive development, in which children add different systems of cognitively relating to their environment as they age into new stages.<sup>604</sup> An important note about Piaget's

---

<sup>598</sup> Mitchell and Ziegler, *Fundamentals*, 72.

<sup>599</sup> Burman, *Deconstructing*, 243-4.

<sup>600</sup> Schaffer, *Key Concepts*, 36.

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid*, 37.

<sup>602</sup> Harris and Westermann, *A Student's Guide*, 25.

<sup>603</sup> Burman, *Deconstructing*, 243-4.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid*, 243-4.

system is that he is less concerned with *what* children know – whether or not a child has acquired a certain concept – and more concerned with *how* children know and think about things, and how they relate to their own knowledge.<sup>605</sup> As such, Piaget’s stages are less about the things a child can know and do, and more about the methods children apply to relate to their environment.

While it is not necessary for the purposes of this chapter to know Piaget’s stages in detail, describing them briefly is useful for illustrating what Piaget means when speaking of how children think. Piaget names his stages the Sensorimotor Stage (birth-2 years), the Pre-Operational Stage (2-7 years), the Concrete Operational Stage (7-11 years), and Formal Operational Stage (11-up). In the Sensorimotor Stage, infants gather information and relate through reflexes, basic motor skills, and physical stimuli, before the ability to think and conceptualize develops. In the Pre-Operational Stage, children acquire language, symbolic thought, and basic thinking skills, but are still flexible in thought frameworks and have yet to think much beyond their immediate surroundings. In the Concrete Operational Stage, children begin to think logically and solidify theories about the way the world works. In the Formal Operational Stage, corresponding with the onset of adolescence, children begin to think more abstractly and hypothetically, with better understanding of concepts not directly attached to reality.<sup>606</sup> While there is a directionality to these stages (Piaget definitely thinks formal operations are more advanced than concrete operations), each does build on the previous stage, such that no method of thinking is abrogated or discarded. Further research has largely discredited some specific arguments within Piaget’s stage framework, as children have been shown to demonstrate characteristics and behaviours well above their stage in certain domains, given their age and other typical behaviours, while remaining normal in other domains.<sup>607</sup> However, while that research may problematize Piaget’s specific stages, it does not wholly discredit the existence of discrete stages that may be progressed through in a set order during childhood development, and indeed, psychologists still use stages as helpful frameworks for understanding development on a broad scale and recognizing periods of quick and qualitative change.<sup>608</sup>

---

<sup>605</sup> Ibid, 248.

<sup>606</sup> Harris and Westermann, *A Student’s Guide*, 29.

<sup>607</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>608</sup> Butterworth and Harris, *Principles*, 27-30.

More pertinent to this section are Piaget's descriptions of the underlying mechanisms for the way children construct their thinking. Piaget envisions the child as an individual scientist, who understands its environment through direct actions of observation and experiment, solving problems and finding better solutions to understanding its reality.<sup>609</sup> Children develop "schemes," or systems for understanding reality, by the mechanism of "adaptation," which can be broken into three parts: "assimilation," "accommodation," and "equilibration." Assimilation is when the child has developed a certain scheme for understanding reality – e.g. I can pick up and handle toy balls – and upon experiencing a phenomenon, such as receiving a rubber ball as a toy, includes that new experience into its existing scheme for ball-handling. The rubber ball does not remain a wholly distinct phenomenon in this scheme: it becomes categorized as one of many balls that can be picked up. Accommodation is when the child encounters a phenomenon that contradicts its established rules and frameworks in some way – for example, picking up a glass ball, which while also a ball, feels very different than the rubber one, being more slippery and fragile. The child now has to change its scheme or construct new ones to accommodate a different way of handling the glass ball. In this case, the child could nuance its scheme to handle balls differently based on each ball's surface characteristics. Equilibration is the process of periodically restructuring schemes to bring assimilation and accommodation into balance – whether that means making changes to existing schemes, or throwing schemes out and creating new ones, equilibration allows children to continually reinterpret the way they understand reality in order to develop the best schemes.<sup>610</sup>

In this way, Piaget argues, children constantly construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct their ideas about reality wholly from their own explorative and experimental experience. The process of equilibration acts as a motivating force to resolve tensions inherent in the numerous constructed schemes, and pushes the child into more flexible cognitive levels, and thus into higher stages of cognitive development.<sup>611</sup> The handling of schemes is thus a dynamic process by

---

<sup>609</sup> Robert S. Siegler and Martha W. Alibali. *Children's Thinking* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), 32.

<sup>610</sup> Bee and Boyd. *The Developing Child*. 150-151.

<sup>611</sup> Mitchell and Ziegler, *Key Concepts*, 44.

which the child is perpetually negotiating its relationship with its environment, and changes its thinking to better negotiate that relationship.

Piaget's idea that the child acts as an individual scientist to investigate the world has been challenged by many psychologists, including Lev Vygotsky, who argue that personal relationships and other surrounding cultural factors play a significant role in the child's cognitive development.<sup>612</sup> Piaget's system emphasizes children interacting with objects and their physical environment for constructing their thinking, while Vygotsky highlights the relationships and social context that enable children to actively construct their knowledge. Vygotsky's "social constructivism" argues that, as Schaffer puts it, "the key to cognitive development lies not so much in the child's spontaneous discoveries while exploring inanimate objects as in the interpersonal processes that occur when the child interacts with more knowledgeable people."<sup>613</sup> Vygotsky argues that development occurs through the internalization of socially shared processes – meaning, that first adults or surrounding peers perform certain cognitive tasks with a child, and then the child internalizes them and performs them on its own. Thus, social interaction is not an outside force that can affect development – or a context in which development simply occurs – but is instead a causal mechanism for development.<sup>614</sup> Vygotsky's theory thus puts more emphasis on the cultural values passed down from caregivers, the relationships of learning between more-knowledgeable caregivers and less-knowledgeable children, and the role of language in mediating and enabling such processes.

It is important to note that both Piaget and Vygotsky hold to constructivism, and, as Schaffer notes, the idea that children actively contribute to their own development is now generally accepted within developmental psychology as a field. However, Vygotsky's theory, especially in its emphasis on language and adult-child dialogue, has proven more experimentally appealing to psychologists in recent times than Piaget's, largely because it provides more tangible aspects of development to test.<sup>615</sup> For Vygotsky, children's participation in social activity is what most

---

<sup>612</sup> Siegler and Alibali, *Children's Thinking*, 110.

<sup>613</sup> Schaffer, *Key Concepts*, 38.

<sup>614</sup> Siegler and Alibali, *Children's Thinking*, 110-1.

<sup>615</sup> Schaffer, *Key Concepts*, 38. Schaffer notes that Piaget's concepts are rather vague, and can appeal more to intuition than experimental verification.

develops their cognitive capabilities, and the internalization of language is seen as the main area of this development.<sup>616</sup> Vygotsky's theory also makes use of stages in this regard: the relationship between a child's thinking and language passes through "pre-intellectual social speech (0–3 years) where thinking and language are not contingent, egocentric speech (3–7 years) where language is used aloud and alongside behaviour and inner speech (7+) where the child uses speech silently to control their own behaviour but also publicly for social communication."<sup>617</sup> In this way, language plays a pivotal role in the way children construct their ways of thinking and relate to their environment and other people.

Vygotsky calls language the preeminent "cultural tool," which he defines as devices which societies use to support and extend their understanding of the world – other such tools are scientific theories, counting systems, and even technologies like books, clocks, and calendars.<sup>618</sup> All of these tools help older members of society pass down learning and experience to younger members, and thus shape children's thought processes. Cognitive development, for Vygotsky, is a progression of the "intermental" to "intramental" – that which the child first constructs in relationship is then internalized in their own thought systems. Schaffer writes "The adult acts as tutor, the child as apprentice, but the interaction of the two is of a dynamic, mutually adjustive nature, for the child is no mere passive participant but an active partner in the learning process, albeit a junior one."<sup>619</sup> Key in this process is Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development," which is the difference between what a child can do on its own, and what a child can do while assisted by someone more skilled or knowledgeable. For Vygotsky, the latter category – children's assisted activity – is part of a child's real aptitude that is realized through the interaction with the more skilled.<sup>620</sup> It is this interaction, bringing the child into the zone of proximal development, which encourages and fosters cognitive development, as the child first engages with learning that is outside its comprehension yet through adult assistance enters into the child's understanding, thus moving from intermental to intramental. Though Vygotsky's zone of proximal development

---

<sup>616</sup> Brown, *Developmental Psychology*, 51.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>618</sup> Schaffer, *Key Concepts*, 126. For example, clocks and calendars make us organize our ideas in a time dimension, and attach importance to those times.

<sup>619</sup> Ibid, 125.

<sup>620</sup> Siegler and Alibali. *Children's Thinking*. 111-2.

has been criticized for its vagueness in application, it has fostered much research into how to develop these ideas into practical, education methods.<sup>621</sup>

While the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky have been the most influential for cognitive developmental psychology, there are other approaches in the field that stem from engaging psychological research with computational and dynamic models. “Information processing” approaches treat the human mind like a computer, in which the child receives an input from the environment, decides on an appropriate response, and then produces an output action. This process is automatic, and as the brain matures it processes the information both faster and in more organized ways.<sup>622</sup> “Connectionist networks” approach cognition similarly, but rather than treating the process serially as information processing approaches do, connectionist networks claim that cognition is an intricate system of nodes which handle information in parallel. It is the total pattern of activity in the network, not just in single processes, that gives rise to the complexities of cognition and development.<sup>623</sup> Connectionist networks are computer simulations, not accurate renderings of brain architecture (which is vastly more complex than we can currently model), but do function as guides to approaching the possible neural processes of children.<sup>624</sup> “Dynamic systems” approaches, of which connectionist networks are sometimes considered a type, recognize that the operation of the whole system of cognition is greater than the sum of its parts, and try to approach cognitive development through recognizing the interactions between subsystems, circular influences, and the totality of cognition.<sup>625</sup> The aim of dynamic systems approaches is to explain how qualitative changes in development can emerge from small-scale quantitative changes.<sup>626</sup> While these newer approaches are more quantitatively precise and computationally oriented than Piaget’s and Vygotsky’s theories, there is no mutual exclusion between the approaches – these theories simply provide more tools for understanding processes from a quantifiable and data-driven perspective which Piaget and Vygotsky analyzed from a more holistic perspective.

---

<sup>621</sup> Schaffer, *Key Concepts*, 127-8.

<sup>622</sup> Brown, *Developmental Psychology*, 52.

<sup>623</sup> Schaffer, *Key Concepts*, 44.

<sup>624</sup> *Ibid*, 47.

<sup>625</sup> *Ibid*, 39-40.

<sup>626</sup> Harris and Westermann, *A Student’s Guide*, 39.

There are several commonalities between all of these approaches to cognitive development. They all place emphasis on the child's active role in constructing or shaping its thought processes. They all focus on the relationship between the child and its environment, though different theories assign weight differently to the inert physical environment versus the personal and cultural environment. And all of these theories posit cognitive development as dynamic, with the child's cognition constantly changing and needing to adapt to its circumstances. Indeed, all of these theories testify to the introductory Montessori insight, that children engage with their environment in order to change and shape themselves. While the differences in these theories cannot be ignored for those who practice developmental psychology, these commonalities witness to a consensus understanding of certain essential aspects of cognitive development, and the differences often provide more nuance and color to those aspects than they do stumbling blocks. Turning to filiation, and to the mental processes associated with it, we will now explore how viewing filiation through the lens of cognitive development reveals a participatory relationship between childhood cognitive development and filiation, with ramifications for how we should relate to knowledge, to other people, and to God.

### *Filiation as Acquiring the Mind of Christ*

Earlier in this chapter, we spoke of filiation primarily from a relational perspective, in which filiation was about becoming a child of God as Christ is God's Son. However, there is also a mental and behavioral perspective to relating to God, which Rowan Williams dubs "purification" and which we mentioned above when introducing filiation. While Williams speaks of purification as a separate pole of emphasis from filiation, as the two concepts often drift apart to the detriment of one's relationship with God, Williams makes it clear that purification is actually inseparable from filiation, and required for that goal.<sup>627</sup> Purification is the disciplining of the passions and thoughts that orients one towards a godlike life, or sharing in the divine wisdom.<sup>628</sup> Again, the goal of purification is Christological, as it is Christ's life – humanity lived divinely – that needs to be acquired by the believer. Commenting on the theology of the *Philokalia*, the Greek Eastern compendium of patristic writings, Williams writes that Christ is buried in us, and that he alone will rise in us – so failure to grow spiritually is to imprison Christ within us, restrict

---

<sup>627</sup> Williams, *Looking East in Winter*, 94-5.

<sup>628</sup> *Ibid*, 94.

his freedom, and prevent his incarnation in our virtues, contemplation, and actions. We must open ourselves completely to his life within us.<sup>629</sup>

To do so, Williams argues, we must “live truthfully in the world as it really is.”<sup>630</sup> Sin, ignorance, and false perceptions of oneself and God destroy the possibilities of seeing reality in its truth, and thus destroy the possibility of living in a Christ-like manner. Thus, purification is foremost a purification of our awareness, such that we can be attuned to true reality as found in its relationship to God and to ourselves.<sup>631</sup> This true reality, Williams notes, is a tightly interwoven and dependent reality – as noted above, everything is dependent upon everything else in creation, and it all is ultimately dependent on God. Everything in creation has its own *logos*, its own rational intelligibility inherent in Christ – but our sin and passions have blinded us from apprehending this reality. Williams writes that “the problem is not that we have *made a mistake* about the world (as we might with the outer forms of things) but that in one crucial sense we have *mistaken what the world itself is*. We have acted or reacted as though the world were a separate agent or set of agencies, with an interest or agenda standing in rivalry to our own individual interest.”<sup>632</sup> To truly purify oneself, therefore, is to apprehend the world as it is, and to grow in one’s relationship with the world. This inevitably means acknowledging both the parts of reality, and the whole dynamically connected web those parts form.<sup>633</sup> One cannot apprehend the *logoi* without apprehending the *Logos*. Reason, in this way of thinking, is not about instrumental control or conceptual definitions, but is “*appropriate responsiveness*,” to the human and the non-human order alike.<sup>634</sup>

There is an interesting parallel between this idea and Piaget’s notion of schemes. As explained above, for Piaget, children’s schemes are representations of the world, but they must constantly be revised and negotiated according to new information. It is the force of equilibration that drives development – the schemes cannot remain static, but must break down and reassemble to match the experienced reality. Purification, as Williams describes it, is similar in that the believer must

---

<sup>629</sup> Ibid, 32-3.

<sup>630</sup> Ibid, 12-13.

<sup>631</sup> Ibid, 12-13.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>633</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>634</sup> Ibid, 69.

put off the distortions of their own perception of reality to apprehend reality as it truly is. However, there are difficulties with this comparison: Alexis Trader picks up on Piaget's schemes as an example of exactly the wrong way of thinking about reality from a theological perspective. Trader writes that schemes are often exaggerated in youth, rigid, and overgeneralized; thus, schemes provide children with inaccurate portrayals of reality. For Trader, schemes are the cloud over one's conceptual eyes, which prevent one from experiencing reality as it is. Trader comes to the conclusion that humans are not meant to remain children, but to become like God incarnate<sup>635</sup> – in this sense, schemes are inherently contrary to the goals of purification and filiation. For Trader, schemes are intrinsically flawed and difficult to change, and thus childhood thinking is far from exemplary, but rather must be overcome.<sup>636</sup>

While Trader's worries are not wrong, they are also not fatal to the relating of Piaget's theory with Williams's idea of purification. In fact, they hit on an important point, which is that schemes are not endpoints in Piaget's system at all, but are meant to be discarded along the path of development. The constant process of scheme adaptation is a recognition that while schemes aim to accurately render reality to a child, they naturally fail and need revision. The whole thrust of Piaget's system, therefore, is that ways of thinking must be constantly adjusted and changed at the impetus of experiencing the surrounding environment. Such a thrust, I would argue, is much like purification: one must abandon sin-distorted ways of relating to one's surroundings, and acquire a true apprehension of those surroundings, grounded in their relationship with God. The fundamental distinction between the two processes – which I would actually characterize as revealing an asymmetrical relationship – is that scheme adaptation is powered by the child's own effort, while in purification you cannot achieve your goal without God working within you. Of course, another aspect of this asymmetry is that in scheme adaptation, a child can more and more faithfully represent their environment without ever truly reaching perfectly accurate representation – whereas in purification, to apprehend reality with the mind of Christ is to know it truly and accurately. One might say that this is a spiritual “zone of proximal development” – with God's help and grace, we can cross the gap from what we are unable to accomplish by our own powers to what we can do by cooperating with his power.

---

<sup>635</sup> Alexis Trader, *Ancient Christian Wisdom and Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy: A Meeting of Minds*, 69-73.

<sup>636</sup> *Ibid*, 103.

Purification, in this understanding, is truly just an essential part of filiation. Williams describes this whole process as acquiring the “‘filial’ mind”<sup>637</sup> – and this also links what we have been discussing about cognitive development and spiritual apprehension with the above discussion on dependence. After all, to know reality truthfully is to know how it is all interconnected and related to God, which means to know its fundamental dependence. Williams writes:

All created agency thus has to be seen in this context: to be created is to derive from an act that is not ours, but it is also to be the conduit of generative gift to the rest of the finite order, each finite agent giving in its own unique way the life that it has itself been given...the fundamental problem with the life of ‘passion’ is that it drives us to representations that are detached from the awareness of gift, gift received and gift transmitted.<sup>638</sup>

Living a Christ-like life, becoming a child of God, and relating to God as Christ does, are all unified and effected by purifying ourselves of false representations and by engaging with our environment and other people. We must do so in a way that is not about changing or mischaracterizing the environment and others, but is rather about adapting ourselves to be part of the dynamic and dependent system that is the finite order, or creation. Much like how in Vygotsky what is intermental must be internalized to become intramental, we must shape and form ourselves according to our true relationships with the rest of creation.

This brings us to another essential aspect of apprehending reality truthfully, in Williams’s conception, which is to also truthfully apprehend the very character of knowledge. Williams notes that rationality is to know what makes a thing what it is, or to apprehend its *logos*:

‘Reason’ is what attunes us to the reality of where we live in a way that makes possible the fullest mutual movement of life and intelligent communication; it is to be understood theologically as the embodiment in time and space of the eternal

---

<sup>637</sup> Williams, *Looking East in Winter*, 72.

<sup>638</sup> *Ibid*, 72-3.

receiving and communicating/responding that is the life of the second divine hypostasis. To live consistently as human spirits within this *logos*-animated exchange is ‘deification’ in the sense of growing into the filial identity for which we are made.<sup>639</sup>

Knowledge has an essentially relational character, in this perception: it is defined both by true attunement to the rest of creation, and by the knower’s own active involvement in those relationships between the knower and created things. One cannot know things passively in this system, for knowledge is defined by the active relationships between the self and others. As Piaget’s child explores, plays, and takes an active role in relating to its environment, and as Vygotsky’s child grows through relating to its social context and others, so also does the Christian believer achieve deification in filiation through its active relationships with others and non-human creation.

The Christological tenor underlying all of this is found in the *logoi* that define created things – Williams writes that to truly know is a union of the *logos* of the knower with the *logos* in what is known, such that knowledge is fundamentally about participation.<sup>640</sup> Christos Yannaras speaks of knowledge as inherently “dialogical,” in that to know a thing is for *logos* to encounter *logos*. This is because Christ as Logos is personally inherent in all of creation, and thus true knowledge of creation is of a personal character, and ultimately referent to God.<sup>641</sup> As explored in Chapter 2, to know someone else personally is to participate in their energies, and to participate in God’s energies is to advance towards deification. Filiation thus requires a type of knowledge that is not passive, detached, or “objective” in any impersonal sense of that word, but rather is active, relational, and personal. What the theories of cognitive development above indicate is that children develop their thinking through active, relational, and personal interactions, and thus we can claim that the way a child instinctively or inherently develops knowledge participates in the type of knowing required for filiation.

---

<sup>639</sup> Ibid, 77-8.

<sup>640</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>641</sup> Christos Yannaras, *Elements of Faith*, 40-2.

This is why the above discussion on cognitive development emphasizes the *how* of knowing over the *what* – because ultimately, filiation is not about the acquiring of specific facts of knowledge, but about a process of knowing. Williams argues that “truthfulness means *the range of sustainable response* activated in a knower in contact with a known object, not simply a set of checkable statements about an object.”<sup>642</sup> Cognitive development, with its emphasis on the response of the child in relation to its surroundings, is well equipped to deal with the sorts of knowledge that is necessary for filiation. “Checkable statements about an object” are not the measure of seeing that object with the mind of Christ. A participatory model of knowledge<sup>643</sup> is necessary for seeing things in their divine truth, for engaging with them as manifestations of the one Logos, and thus relating to them as a wholly dependent, participatory person.

#### *Concluding Thoughts on Cognitive Development and the Mind of Christ*

I began this discussion of cognitive development and filiation with the Montessorian principle that children seek to change themselves through engaging with their environment, while adults seek to change their environment. If the discussed theories of cognitive development testify to the first part of that principle, Williams’s discussion of purification as filiation testifies to the dangers of the second. The desire to change the environment to fit one’s own will is exactly the sort of false relationship to the world that Williams argues needs to be purified away. True knowledge comes through the acknowledgement of dependence, the interconnectedness of oneself with other things and people, and everything’s ultimate inherence in Christ. And true knowing is inherently participatory, dynamic, and interconnected, and is not simply static information acquisition. To acquire the mind of Christ, and thus to relate to the world and God as a child of God, is to see reality as it is, purified of our distorting passions and false ideas.

As noted earlier, to claim a participatory relationship between childhood cognitive development and filiation per my Christological method, the two must be differentiated, unified, and asymmetrical. The differentiation is clear (one is a regular and observable psychological phenomenon, the other a somewhat contingent and ineffable spiritual phenomenon), but so is the unity: the features that define childhood cognitive development are the features that define the

---

<sup>642</sup> Williams, *Looking East in Winter*, 84.

<sup>643</sup> *Ibid*, 85.

mental aspect of filiation, or acquiring the mind of Christ. From Piaget, we have the ideas of continually reforming schema, engaging actively and intentionally with one's environment, and the importance of thinking processes over specific information – these contribute respectively to the theological processes of purification, relating to the *logoi* of created things, and the participatory character of knowledge. From Vygotsky, we have the ideas of the zone of proximal development, the internalization of speech and knowledge from external factors, and the importance of relational, personal, and cultural influence – these contribute respectively to the theological ideas of depending wholly on God to enable us to see true reality, shaping our own minds and hearts through attunement to our interconnected relationship, and personal character of knowledge. Even the more computational theories of cognitive development emphasize the need for each of us to actively and more accurately process our surrounding environment, rather than prioritizing the imposition of the personal will on our surroundings, or the passive acquisition of information. The asymmetry between them is the recognition that cognitive development theories are wholly concerned with the child and creation, while filiation is primarily concerned with God – and while cognitive development occurs under the child's own power, filiation ultimately relies on God's power. However, this all means that to claim a participatory relationship between childhood cognitive development and filiation is to claim that the way children learn and think is pointing us to the way we need to learn and think about God. Again, if children are exemplars in this chapter, it is because their way of living and knowing is inherently conducive to knowing God.

## **Conclusion**

In the first section of this chapter, I introduced the theological tradition of seeing children as exemplary models of Christian living, so as to propose engaging with childhood developmental psychology as an application of my Chalcedonian Christological method. If children are truly exemplars of Christ-like living, then there is merit in investigating the phenomenon of childhood as a way of approaching the idea that Christ is the *telos* of human living. To do so, I have made the case for identifying a relationship of participation between childhood developmental psychology and Rowan Williams's concept of filiation, particularly through engaging with the psychological theories of attachment and cognitive development. To see Christ as one's end is fundamentally to see one's *telos* as becoming a child of God, and actual children are relevant to

that concept. The language of analogy inherent in the asymmetry of our Chalcedonian Christological method points to this, but so also do the deep connections between the developmental psychological theories and the expanded theological reflection on filiation. Attachment and cognitive development are both psychological phenomena that participate in the theological phenomenon of filiation, insofar as they testify to a unified experience of relating and knowing others and God. Children who are securely attached to their caregivers, and children who explore and play with the world around them, are exemplifying Christ-like living in the way they both relate to the world and shape their own selves. It is thus through this chapter's application of my Christological method, towards the goal of becoming like Christ, that I propose we understand how to be like little children and become a child of God.

## Chapter 6: Application 2 – Psychology of Mental Well-Being and Christ Crucified

### Introduction

In this chapter, the second of my applications of the Chalcedonian Christological method developed in this thesis, I aim to examine the significance of the cross of Christ to psychological conversations surrounding mental health and well-being. I make this choice for several reasons: first, this thesis has focused on how science-theology conversations surrounding humanity change when examined through the lens of Chalcedonian Christology, and an essential aspect of traditional Chalcedonian Christology is reflection on the crucified Christ and his salvific role for humanity. Chalcedonian Christology, in large part, insisted on its central tenets – Christ’s singular personhood and two natures – precisely because of its witness to the salvific work of Christ wrought on the cross. This can be seen in the *Tome of Leo*, the letter of Pope Leo the Great written just before the Council of Chalcedon; the language and theology of the *Tome* was a primary influence on the Chalcedonian Definition. In response to a Christology that denied Christ’s true and full humanity, Leo insists on the full humanity and full divinity of Christ, and makes specific reference to the crucifixion:

In this preservation, then, of the real quality of both natures, both being united in one person, lowliness was taken on by majesty, weakness by strength, mortality by the immortal. And in order to pay the debt of our fallen state, inviolable nature was united to one capable of suffering so that (and this is the sort of reparation we needed) one and the same mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, could die in the one nature and not die in the other.<sup>644</sup>

The uniting of humanity’s finite, passible, and weak nature with the strong impassibility of divinity is thus seen most starkly on the cross, in Christ’s suffering and death – and it is on the cross where the full implications of Chalcedon are demonstrated. For if there is truly one Christ, who could “die in the one nature and not die in the other,” then the whole of human nature,

---

<sup>644</sup> Leo the Great, *Letters St. Leo the Great*, Trans. Edmund Hunt (New York: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 95-6.

including its end in mortality and its weakness in suffering, is united to the divine nature in Christ's single person.

This has several implications for salvation: as Leo notes, Christ's impassible nature is what enables him to save passible human nature through his encounter with death in both natures: "We could not overcome the author of sin and death had not Christ taken on our nature and made it His; sin could not defile Him nor death hold Him in bondage."<sup>645</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, if many patristic theologians understood salvation to be union with God, and Gregory of Nazianzus affirms that what is assumed by Christ is saved, then the cross reveals that even human suffering and death have been made salvific through their uniting to the Son of God – meaning, that through suffering and death the human person can achieve salvation (as notably seen in martyrdom).<sup>646</sup> This is why, as Meyendorff argues, Chalcedonian Christology emphasizes the deification of humanity not in an automatic or physical way – as if solely the act of Christ's Incarnation enables humanity's salvation through its automatic union with God – but rather it spotlights the importance of Christ's suffering and crucifixion in bringing about this union:

The Incarnation implied tragedy and struggle. The Creator, by assuming the created and fallen flesh, met evil and death face to face. He met and overcame these realities of the fallen world, which he did not create but only tolerated. This tolerance reached its ultimate point when the incarnated (sic) Son of God accepted a human death on the cross: this ultimate point was also his ultimate victory.<sup>647</sup>

It follows, then, that our salvation in and union to Christ is likewise accomplished in struggle and in meeting the world's harsh realities. Such an understanding of Chalcedonian Christology resonates with numerous scriptural imagery surrounding being crucified with Christ: Jesus teaches that one must deny oneself and take up one's cross in order to follow him and gain salvation,<sup>648</sup> while Paul professes that "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I

---

<sup>645</sup> Ibid, 93.

<sup>646</sup> Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, 108-9.

<sup>647</sup> Meyendorff, *New Life in Christ*, 495.

<sup>648</sup> Mark 8:34-5.

who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.”<sup>649</sup> Thus, throughout the New Testament and in traditional theology, it is attested that human salvation and life in Christ must involve a crucifixion of some sort, such that the believer is united to Christ not just in his humanity, but in his crucified humanity.<sup>650</sup> This is why John Behr argues that the crucified Christ is the true image of God,<sup>651</sup> and thus for humans to be in the image of God is to conform to the image of Christ crucified.<sup>652</sup> What this means for the average believer is a more complex issue, however. As Part 3 of this thesis focuses specifically on bringing psychology and theology to bear on humanity’s *telos* in Christ, this chapter aims to tease out the difficulties surrounding how to understand this spiritual crucifixion in relation to our own mental states.

Another reason for my choice of this chapter’s subject matter is that while the cross of Christ is employed by several science-theology scholars in conversations surrounding the God-world relationship and the problem of suffering in the natural world, it is far rarer in conversations surrounding the human mind, or in engagements with psychology.<sup>653</sup> Mental health is also an important topic in the contemporary public sphere, and is thus apt for exploration by a thesis that seeks to better understand humanity in light of Christology. To this last reason, the idea of the crucified Christ serving as illustrative for humanity is a particularly salient notion for engagement with mental health, as it strikes a dissonance in the minds of many: the Christian emphasis on the selfless suffering of Christ on the cross can seem ill-matched with a contemporary culture that is placing more emphasis on mental health and well-being.

Thus, this chapter seeks to address the question: what is the significance of Christ crucified for a person’s ideal mental state?<sup>654</sup> In other words, how can psychological practices that focus on

---

<sup>649</sup> Gal. 2:20, NRSV.

<sup>650</sup> John Behr, “The Promise of the Image,” 37. John Behr, in making this argument, draws on the Epistle of Barnabas, that “human beings are earth that suffers” (Epistle of Barnabas 6.8).

<sup>651</sup> John Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, 176.

<sup>652</sup> Behr, “The Promise of the Image,” 37.

<sup>653</sup> One example of such an engagement is Simon D. Podmore, ““My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Between Consolation and Desolation” in *Spirituality, Theology and Mental Health: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Christopher C.H. Cook, 193-210 (London: SCM Press, 2013) – this is more of a philosophical essay and engages less with empirical psychology, and yet it is the only essay in this volume of multidisciplinary perspectives to mention the cross.

<sup>654</sup> The cross of Christ has many other implications for personal well-being, as it has been appealed to in treatments of physical suffering, oppression, victims of violence, persecution, and altruism. While acknowledging the validity

mental health and well-being be related to a theology that appears to focus on suffering and self-denial? We have argued in this thesis that psychology and theology can be understood as in a Chalcedonian Christological relationship of participation, in which the two disciplines exist in an inherent asymmetry in which distinct psychological realities draw their being from theological realities. If we wish to apply this Christological method to the above question – and thus claim that psychologies of mental health participate in the theological idea of Christ crucified – then we must show that the crucifixion is emblematic of a salvific, and thus ideal, mental state for Christian believers, and that psychological disciplines which seek to improve mental health thus draw their being from this salvific reality, such that their practices aim to effect mental states in the human person that ultimately reflect the cruciform nature of the saved Christian mind.

In order to make this rather complex issue more tractable, I will narrow my scope in engaging with both disciplines, such that a deeper analysis of this chapter's main question is possible. Theologically, I will primarily engage with Khaled Anatolios's recent work *Deification through the Cross*.<sup>655</sup> I choose this work for three primary reasons: it provides a comprehensive overview of traditional theology on Christ's suffering and death on the cross; it is informed by patristic and traditional sources, including liturgical, scriptural, and conciliar sources; and it focuses specifically on the psychological aspects of Christ's salvific suffering. Anatolios argues that the underlying theme of all conceptions of Christ's effecting of salvation on the cross is that of "Doxological Contrition" – in which glorifying God and repentance for sin are the same act – and I will explore how this theme characterizes the *telos* of humanity in Christ. Psychologically, I will present two examples of psychologies focused on mental health for engaging with this Christological idea of doxological contrition: cognitive therapy, particularly as expressed in the work of its pioneer, Aaron Beck; and positive psychology, particularly as expressed in the work of its pioneer, Martin Seligman. Both cognitive therapy and positive psychology aim to improve the mental health and well-being of human persons, and are not mutually exclusive; however, the way each is applied and expressed reveal differing emphases and methodologies for addressing

---

and applicability of Christ crucified to issues such as these, this chapter largely brackets them out to focus on the relevance of Christ crucified to personal mental health as examined through the interior workings of the self.

<sup>655</sup> Khaled Anatolios, *Deification through the Cross: An Eastern Christian Theology of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2020). *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=6407721>.

issues of mental healing. Both also claim to be empirical psychological practices, basing their conclusions on clinical and experimental evidence. As such, I will argue that both cognitive therapy and positive psychology can be understood as existing in a relationship of participation with doxological contrition.

## Background

The cross of Christ is not absent from the science-theology discourse – as noted in Chapter 3, it is frequently appealed to by scholars who wish to characterize the God-world relationship as “kenotic” in some way. As also noted in the Introduction, the cross is particularly drawn upon by scholars of theistic evolution such as John Haught, Christopher Southgate, and Ted Peters, who desire to reconcile the suffering-heavy picture of evolution as presented by contemporary science with Christian theology. For example, Southgate writes: “I take the Cross of Christ to be the epitome of this divine compassion, the moment of God's taking ultimate responsibility for the pain of creation, and – with the Resurrection – to inaugurate the transformation of creation.”<sup>656</sup> Haught writes that “God's relationship to the creation is apparently a kind of ‘letting be,’”<sup>657</sup> in that God's relationship to creation is defined by the same divine self-outpouring that Christ exemplifies on the cross.<sup>658</sup> Peters writes that “we learn from the cross of Jesus Christ that God co-suffers with victims of predation and extinction, feeling with creatures their despair, abandonment, physical suffering, and death.”<sup>659</sup>

In these above quotes, we see an issue that plagues much of the discussion surrounding the cross, which we have already noted in Chapter 3 when discussing kenosis: the broad spectrum of how the cross can be interpreted when applying it as a hermeneutic. Kenosis, as we saw Coakley note in her critique, is used to mean anything from “‘risk’ to ‘self-limitation’ to ‘sacrifice’ to ‘self-giving’ to ‘self-emptying’ – and even to ‘annihilation.’”<sup>660</sup> And in these above quotes, the cross is invoked to mean God's self-withdrawal from creation's agency (in Haught), God's

---

<sup>656</sup> Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 16.

<sup>657</sup> John Haught, “God and Evolution,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. Philip Clayton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 707.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.*, 699-700.

<sup>659</sup> Ted Peters, “Extinction, Natural Evil, and the Cosmic Cross,” *Zygon* 53,3 (2018): 692

<sup>660</sup> Coakley, “Kenosis: Theological Meanings and Gender Connotations,” 203.

responsibility for suffering in creation (for Southgate) and God's co-suffering with creation (in Peters). These interpretations of the cross hold very different implications not just for the specific matter of theistic evolution, but also for how to understand Christian theology more generally – what does the cross mean for what it is to be God, to be human, and to be saved? This ambiguity must be resolved if the cross is to be appealed to in science-theology discussions.

Such ambiguity may explain why when the cross is invoked in science-theology conversations about human mental states or within the psychology-theology dialogue, it is often invoked with a note of trepidation. Ellen Charry and Russell Kosits, in a joint psychology-theology article, take a rather negative view on the Christian focus on the cross when considering ethical action:

One source of the Christian objection to pleasure is the tradition of agapistic ethics focused on the idea that we should imitate Christ on the cross by taking up our own cross to follow him. Agapistic ethics asserts that moral effort is unconditional and advocates painful self-sacrifice for the sake of 'the other'. One is to give and give and give and when one has nothing left to give one gives more.<sup>661</sup>

Charry and Kosits disagree with this position, notably both from a psychological perspective and a theological perspective:

We do not think that this view pleases God. God did not create the world for its languishing. Harmful self-sacrifice is not the norm, not only because God laments our languishing, but more importantly because when we waste away psychologically we cannot help the world to flourish, so it threatens to take others down with us. Happiness begets all manner of positive outcomes.<sup>662</sup>

---

<sup>661</sup> Ellen T. Charry and Russell D. Kosits, "Christian theology and positive psychology: an exchange of gifts," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 12,5 (2017): 472.

<sup>662</sup> *Ibid*, 472.

Their objection to this “negative” cross language is both psychological and theological: such language is psychologically unhealthy, and God desires happiness for his creation, not languishing. Charry and Kosits argue that there is theological support for seeing the Christian life as one of enjoyment and flourishing in God’s world, and thus psychology (specifically positive psychology, in their case) can show theology all the health benefits of focusing on happiness rather than self-sacrifice.<sup>663</sup>

This argument is important to consider, because it is an indicator of how many people see fundamental emphases, if not tenets, of the Christian tradition as being incompatible with mental health and well-being. For example, Fraser Watts notes that many scholars view the Christian tradition as being obsessed with guilt and shame.<sup>664</sup> This has become a “focus of dispute between psychologists and Christians,” as the former are concerned with the way excessive guilt wreaks havoc on mental health, while the latter emphasize the positive effects of guilt.<sup>665</sup> Watts recognizes the need to address both concerns: excessive guilt is harmful, but Christianity also recognizes the need for a guilt that leads to repentance.<sup>666</sup> In some places, Watts is optimistic about the possibility of separating these two understandings of guilt, writing that “the focus in the two traditions has been on different kinds of guilt; once that is clarified the apparent conflict melts away.”<sup>667</sup> In later writing, however, Watts also acknowledges the complexities inherent in making such a neat separation:

It is quite difficult to find a middle way between being excessively guilt-ridden or excessively complacent about ourselves. Guilt itself is multifaceted and has both cognitive and emotional aspects. It is the cognitive aspect, a recognition that one has done wrong, that is perhaps most valuable, and the emotional aspect of guilt that is most likely to run to excess.<sup>668</sup>

---

<sup>663</sup> Ibid, 472.

<sup>664</sup> Fraser Watts, “Shame, Sin and Guilt,” in *Forgiveness and Truth: Explorations in Contemporary Theology*, ed. Alistair I. McFadyen, Marcel Sarot and Anthony Thiselton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 58.

<sup>665</sup> Fraser Watts, Rebecca Nye, and Sara B. Savage, *Psychology for Christian Ministry* (London: Routledge, 2002), 11-2.

<sup>666</sup> Fraser Watts, “Theology and Science of Mental Health and Well-Being,” *Zygon* 53,2 (2018): 343.

<sup>667</sup> Watts, “Shame, Sin and Guilt,” 67.

<sup>668</sup> Watts, “Theology and Science of Mental Health and Well-Being,” 343.

Separating the cognitive aspects of guilt from its emotional aspects is helpful in one sense – it opens the door for fruitful discussion between theology and psychology on cognitive matters – but is it so straightforward to separate the emotional aspects of guilt from the cognitive aspects? A clear method for delineating the two would be needed. And theologically, what role does guilt truly play in a Christian soteriology that is focused on the cross? I raise this second question because it is not always clear what is the right concept to invoke in discussions of Christian soteriology. Stephen Pattison, for instance, argues that shame is often confused with guilt in the Christian tradition, to the detriment of its practices, as addressing guilt in the believer is not the same as addressing shame (which will still be psychologically harmful).<sup>669</sup> Watts also addresses the distinction between guilt and shame, but notes that there is no single agreed upon distinction between the two concepts: some claim it is about private vs. public wrongdoing, while others claim that guilt focuses on actions while shame focuses on the whole self. Watts notes that these competing distinctions cause much confusion in the literature.<sup>670</sup> Adding to this confusion is the many nuances that these concepts take in the Christian tradition, and in various psychological practices.

Given all of this, I suggest it is more helpful for this chapter to largely bracket out discussions of guilt, shame, and other similar concepts that are often seen as univocal concepts for psychology and theology to engage each other with – rather, I propose to respond to Charry’s and Kosits’s worries by exploring further the precise role the cross holds theologically for the mindset of the Christian. Charry and Kosits may be right to warn against excessive self-degradation in the name of taking up one’s cross, but the solution of simply refocusing on enjoyment and flourishing is not helpful. Just because a theological concept can be abused or taken to excess does not mean the correct response is to reject it and instead place all the emphasis on its opposite. For many Christians, there is just as much fear of unbridled hedonism as there is of excessive self-degradation – the scriptural and traditional witness of theology is that being crucified with Christ, as some form of self-denial, is crucial to the Christian faith, and a simple refocusing on “flourishing” does not address this fundamental conviction.

---

<sup>669</sup> Stephen Pattison, *Shame: Theory, Therapy, Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 248.

<sup>670</sup> Watts, “Shame, Sin and Guilt,” 55-6.

Therefore, what is the psychological importance of the cross, and how can we thus identify a proper relationship of participation between psychological approaches to mental health and the theology of mental attitudes and salvation that arises from the cross? To answer this question, I will turn to Khaled Anatolios's work on doxological contrition in order to articulate a traditional Christological approach to salvation through the cross that specifically focuses on the mental state of Christ and the Christian believer. Part 3 of this thesis is on the *telos* of humanity in Christ, and Anatolios's idea of doxological contrition is derived primarily through engagement with the mental state of Christ on the cross and its subsequent relevance for the Christian. In this way, I aim to avoid the conceptual ambiguity inherent in both the above science-theology scholarship on the cross as a hermeneutic for evolution, and in the terminology that psychologists and theologians share (such as guilt) with differing implications. By investigating this specific relevance of the cross to human mental states, I will thus explore how the psychological disciplines of cognitive therapy and positive psychology can participate in this Christological reality.

### *Mental Health and Salvation*

Before turning to Anatolios's work, one more clarification is necessary regarding the relationship between mental health and salvation. It could be questioned whether psychological healing truly participates in salvation, or whether the concepts are too distinct to have a participatory relationship. However, I argue that theology has a long tradition of connecting observable healing with salvation. In fact, of all the empirical concepts one could claim participate in salvation, healing (both physical and psychological) may have the most robust case.

For example, Vigen Guroian, in an article pertinently titled "Salvation: Divine Therapy," highlights how both the Greek and Latin words commonly translated as "save" – *soteria* and *salvare* – have the denotative meaning "to heal." This linguistic connection, Guroian argues, is used in the Gospels to make clear the meaning of Jesus' healing miracles: when Jesus heals someone, the full implication is not only physical cure but also of eschatological significance (hence the close connection in Jesus' ministry between healing and forgiveness of sins). This close connection between healing and salvation is drawn out in the patristic tradition by frequent

references to Christ as the “physician” or as “medicine,” available for both human salvation and healing through the sacraments.<sup>671</sup>

In writing about the sacrament of unction, Philip Clayton argues for a shift in understanding the sacrament in the West from physical healing to purely salvation (hence the practice of last rites, done only on the deathbed)<sup>672</sup> – however, Clayton criticizes this alleged separation as not true to the New Testament. For Clayton, healing should be understood as sacramental, in that the empirical healing is a sign of the final state of health and wholeness that is salvation: “Healing is never an end in itself, but always a means for revelation; and revelation is always subsumed under the final eschatological self-manifestation of God.”<sup>673</sup> This is the same position we saw from Hunsinger in Chapter 4, when she writes that “the unity between matters like healing and salvation is essentially analogical, contingent, and eschatological in form.”<sup>674</sup> For Hunsinger, this is part of her Chalcedonian relationship between psychology and theology that has informed much of this thesis’s Christological method: healing and salvation exist in unity, differentiation, and asymmetry.

Given Hunsinger’s emphasis on the relationship between psychology and theology, her approach to healing (as well as Clayton’s) must not simply be focused on physical healing but must also extend to psychological healing as well. As we discussed in Chapter 2, both the body and the mind/soul are natural energies of the human person, and thus, as Yannaras argues, distinguished semantically and not ontologically.<sup>675</sup> It is thus valid to claim that psychological health and healing participate in Christian salvation. Don S. Browning makes this point at the beginning of his book *Atonement and Psychotherapy*:

Every limited and preliminary healing-producing activity is fundamentally grounded in, participates in, and finally, is derivative of God’s ultimate healing activity. Insofar as it is grounded in God’s ultimate healing activity, it must show

---

<sup>671</sup> Vigen Guroian, “Salvation: Divine Therapy,” *Theology Today* 61,3 (2004): 317-9.

<sup>672</sup> Philip Clayton, “The theology of spiritual healing,” in *Spiritual Healing: Scientific and Religious Perspectives*, ed. Fraser Watts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 47-8.

<sup>673</sup> *Ibid.*, 60-1.

<sup>674</sup> Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach*, 74.

<sup>675</sup> Christos Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, 48.

some proportionality to the structure and form of the ultimate source of all healing.<sup>676</sup>

As Browning notes, both psychotherapy and theology can be said to be perspectives on healing, and thus their relationship is participatory.<sup>677</sup> In this chapter, we will examine cognitive therapy and positive psychology, both of which also claim to be perspectives on healing and well-being, and thus both of which are ideal to relate to salvation in a participatory way. It is then the character of this participatory relationship that needs to be established: how do cognitive therapy and positive psychology participate in the reality of salvation? To answer this question, there needs to be clarity on the character of Christian salvation – and to quote Browning again, “Christian theology will always center upon the event of Jesus Christ as either the *clue to* or the *occasion for* God’s ultimate healing or salvatory activity or act.”<sup>678</sup> Salvation through Christ is the clue to ultimate healing – and thus we cannot ignore the cross, given its integral role in this salvation. I propose that to understand how cognitive therapy and positive psychology participate in salvation, we must understand how they participate in the saving work effected on the cross – and that means understanding the psychological importance of the crucified Christ. Let us now turn to Anatolios’s work on doxological contrition to explore this crucial concept.

### **Khaled Anatolios on Doxological Contrition**

The central aim of Khaled Anatolios’s *Deification through the Cross* is to identify what is precisely salvific about Christ’s suffering and death on the cross. As he notes, there are many “models” for conceptualizing Christ’s atonement, all of which can find at least some substantiation from scripture and Christian tradition – however, Anatolios desires to identify a foundational soteriological principle that underlies any conception of atonement.<sup>679</sup> In doing so, he starts from the premise that there is salvific efficacy to Christ’s suffering and death specifically: to deny, reject or try and work around this point, he argues, is to reject the New Testament witness and to see the cross as a “scandal” once again.<sup>680</sup> He also argues for seeing

---

<sup>676</sup> Don S. Browning, *Atonement and Psychotherapy* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 26.

<sup>677</sup> *Ibid*, 25-6.

<sup>678</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

<sup>679</sup> Khaled Anatolios, *Deification through the Cross: An Eastern Christian Theology of Salvation*, 31-2.

<sup>680</sup> *Ibid*, 17-8.

Christ's salvific death as a formal cause of our salvation, and not just as an efficient and extrinsic one. If it were only the latter, then our salvation would simply be effected by his suffering and death, and the content of our salvation would need not bear any resemblance to Christ's atoning work on the cross. However, if Christ's crucifixion is also the formal cause of our salvation, then Christian salvation is an imitation and participation in its reality. Anatolios writes:

Salvation is not something that Christ merely brings about; it ultimately consists of being "in Christ" ...If the Son of God has assumed the human condition and renewed it unto salvation, and communicates that renewed humanity to his discipleship, and if Christians have a privileged access to that renewed humanity through sacramental participation "in Christ," then that sacramental participation must itself bear some likeness to its source.<sup>681</sup>

What this means, then, is that human salvation is not only effected by the cross, but it is given its content and pattern by the cross – and thus, what is it to be saved is to be crucified with Christ. The content of the crucifixion is thus the key to understanding our own salvation – and for Anatolios, the content of the crucifixion is "doxological contrition:" the coinherence in Christ of bringing humanity into participation in the glorification of the Trinity and vicariously repenting for humanity's sin and distortion of divine glory.<sup>682</sup> Anatolios summarizes doxological contrition as follows:

The manifestation of divine glory that enables and animates human repentance is at the heart of the biblical understanding of salvation...this dynamic was brought to perfect fulfillment in Jesus Christ, who worked our salvation through his perfect manifestation of divine glory and his perfect human glorification of God, as well as through his perfect contrition for all human sin. Thus I speak of Christ's "doxological contrition" as effecting our salvation and of our salvation as a conscious participation in Christ's doxological contrition.<sup>683</sup>

---

<sup>681</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>682</sup> Ibid, 38.

<sup>683</sup> Ibid, 10.

The two essential concepts in doxological contrition are glory and repentance, and Anatolios emphasizes that they are two parts of the same act. Doxological contrition “is essentially lamentation over the estrangement from divine glory, but this estrangement is nevertheless felt and voiced in the very midst of the retrieval of that glory.”<sup>684</sup> True repentance can only occur within the context of a known and felt distance from the glory to which humanity is called. In this sense, glory is the primary determiner of the relationship: Anatolios writes that contrition must arise from doxology and resolve itself in doxology. It is only when the believer experiences divine glory that sin is fully exposed, and thus does the believer turn towards God in repentance such that they may fully partake in God’s glory.<sup>685</sup> But even though glory is primary, the repentance is real and necessary: Anatolios writes that humans are incapable of repentance on their own, and thus need divine aid in receiving the true gift of repentance. Repentance and salvation, for Anatolios, can thus be considered interchangeable or synonymous to an extent.<sup>686</sup> Therefore, in doxological contrition, glory and repentance are two sides of the same coin, the latter proceeding out of and back into the former. Repentance over one’s sins must be made within full confidence of God’s salvific mercy.<sup>687</sup> Anatolios writes:

Whereas some construals of penal substitution identify the efficient principle of salvific restoration with punishment as such, understood as the objective expression of divine wrath, doxological contrition considers the efficient principle of salvation to be a contrite recognition of the seriousness of sin in light of the divine glory, which is always accompanied by the prayerful invocation of that glory.<sup>688</sup>

*Christological Roots of Doxological Contrition: Liturgy, Scripture, and Conciliar Tradition*

Anatolios draws this idea of doxological contrition from Christology: as noted above, it is in Christ that we see both the fullness of divine glory and the perfect repentance for humanity, such

---

<sup>684</sup> Ibid, 64-5.

<sup>685</sup> Ibid, 75.

<sup>686</sup> Ibid, 69-70.

<sup>687</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>688</sup> Ibid, 100.

that it may enter divine glory. Ascribing repentance or contrition to Christ may be troubling for some, as traditional theology professes Christ to be sinless. However, Anatolios is clear that what is seen on the cross is a vicarious repentance, such that truly sinful humans can enter into Christ's contrition with repentance for their own sins. In a passage worth quoting in full, and to which I will return throughout this chapter, Anatolios explains precisely what Christ's contrition is while also elaborating on the Christological and Trinitarian foundation of doxological contrition:

With regard to the contrition aspect, therefore, we should distinguish Christ's solidarity with human sinners and his intercession to the Father on their behalf, which transpire in the human nature, from his perfect and uninterrupted access to the Father's forgiving love, which he enjoys in the divine nature. Both these conditions concur in Christ's perfect vicarious contrition for human sin, such that the lowliness of the desolation of human sinfulness is taken up in the majesty of divine love and forgiveness. At the same time, Christ's contrition for human sin within his human nature takes its measure from his full enjoyment of the divine glory within his divine nature. *That is to say, his contrition precisely measures the distance between the sordidness of sin and the glory of God.* Likewise, Christ's enjoyment of the divine glory should be conceived to be distributed distinctly in his human and divine natures. Christ glorifies the Father in one way through his human nature, in the mode of prayer and worship, while he glorifies the Father in another way through his divine nature, within the circle of trinitarian glory, by his perfect knowledge and adoration of the Father in the Spirit. Both these modes of glorification concur in Jesus Christ's perfect human-divine glorification of the Father in the Spirit.<sup>689</sup>

In brief, Christ manages to truly reveal the distance between sinful humanity and the glory of God through his salvific work, while also bringing them together. Such is the contrition that flows out of doxology: Christ reveals the glory of God, in which humans are called to participate, and embodies the contrition necessary for sinful humanity to enter into that glory. For Anatolios,

---

<sup>689</sup> Ibid, 169. Emphasis mine.

whichever “model” of atonement one wishes to emphasize, this idea of doxological contrition is what underwrites the atonement, what truly makes it work.

Anatolios makes the case for his notion of doxological contrition by looking at three types of theological sources: the liturgy (Byzantine), the scriptures, and the first seven ecumenical councils. From the liturgy, Anatolios emphasizes the importance of the “passions” (unnatural movements of the will away from God and towards evil): humans are enslaved to the passions that lead them to sin and self-destruction. Salvation, then, is “dispassion” (Gr. *apatheia*), in which slavery to the passions gives way to liberation of the soul for the freedom to love God.<sup>690</sup> By participating in the liturgy, which itself is a dynamic and dramatic presentation of the salvific work of Christ, the believer is gifted Christ’s own dispassion for the sake of human salvation: “the worshiper is invited to enter into the deifying exchange that results from Christ’s salvific work by entering into his self-emptying—the dispassion that is the fruit of Christ’s passion—and by receiving the forgiveness of sins gained by Christ through the cross.”<sup>691</sup> The language of passion and dispassion in the liturgy thus measures the distance between sin and glory that contrition must traverse.

From the scriptures, Anatolios notes how repentance and glory are core themes of the Gospels’ presentation of Christ – however, Anatolios highlights the Transfiguration as a moment when glory and suffering are linked together, as this event is always followed by Christ’s prophecy of his impending crucifixion.<sup>692</sup> In this way, the Gospel accounts reveal that Christ’s glory must be mediated through his suffering on the cross, thus showing how both glory and contrition are essential components of his crucifixion. Anatolios also highlights how Hebrews places an emphasis on the “psychological” elements of Christ’s sacrifice: it is clear, for Anatolios, that the author of Hebrews sees Jesus’ internal desolation and obedience as an offering for sin, and thus shows how Christ’s salvific work is representative contrition.<sup>693</sup> Anatolios even says that Christ’s

---

<sup>690</sup> Ibid, 57-8.

<sup>691</sup> Ibid, 59.

<sup>692</sup> Ibid, 125.

<sup>693</sup> Ibid, 132.

physical sufferings and sacrifice, while not denied, are informed and are efficacious in concert with his psychological sacrifice of contrition.<sup>694</sup>

From the professions of the first seven ecumenical councils, Anatolios highlights how salvation is understood as “the deification of human beings through their graced inclusion into trinitarian life.”<sup>695</sup> However, Anatolios notes that this graced inclusion is not automatic upon the hypostatic union, but is effected through the cross, writing that “the divine Son transformatively appropriates our condition not only by the mere fact of being born in human flesh but by overcoming our estrangement from God through his suffering obedience and submission to the Father.”<sup>696</sup> One particular doctrinal affirmation that Anatolios highlights in his review of the conciliar professions is that of Christ’s fully human mind. For Anatolios, this means that Christ’s human psychological interiority is essential to doxological contrition – human psychology, in Christ, is thus deified through its subjection to divinity.<sup>697</sup> This also means that Christ’s psychological disposition has salvific value, as it is through a human psychological effecting of contrition that Christ saves us<sup>698</sup> – which means our own salvation participates along the same psychological lines. Anatolios notes how Augustine called Christ’s inner experience of dereliction the “sacrament of our inner self,” consisting of “the sufferings of repentance.”<sup>699</sup>

In summary, by drawing on the liturgy, scriptures, and conciliar professions, Anatolios argues for doxological contrition forming the basis of Christ’s salvific actions. Speaking specifically of Christ’s psychological disposition, he writes:

In speaking of doxological contrition as the inner form of all Christ’s actions and sufferings, we are saying that Jesus’s human consciousness was always dialectically informed by his perfect love and praise of the Father in the Spirit combined with his perfect repudiation of and sorrow over human sin. We are

---

<sup>694</sup> Ibid, 132.

<sup>695</sup> Ibid, 143. He emphasizes that this inclusion into the life of the Trinity, through graced incorporation into Christ’s humanity (and thus assimilation to Christ’s divinity) is absolutely essential to any “legitimate” conception of Christian salvation, and that any soteriology without this dogmatic core is “inadequate.”<sup>695</sup>

<sup>696</sup> Ibid, 160.

<sup>697</sup> Ibid, 157.

<sup>698</sup> Ibid, 180.

<sup>699</sup> Ibid, 179.

saying, furthermore, that the determination of all his acts and sufferings by the intentionality of this dialectic of his human consciousness was constitutive of their salvific efficacy.<sup>700</sup>

Doxological contrition is thus the psychological foundation of human salvation, and it has its ultimate roots in Christ and his crucifixion. Both poles of doxological contrition – glory and repentance – are really one and the same act, exemplified by Christ’s unbroken continuity of glorifying God and repenting for human sins.<sup>701</sup> Contrition is not different from glorification, in this understanding, but is rather “the form that human glorification of God takes in the face of human sin.”<sup>702</sup> Anatolios writes that Christ’s contrition was drawn from his continual vision of the glory of God, and thus this contrition “forged a path at every moment of Christ’s existence from the sorrow of sin to the joy of the vision of God.”<sup>703</sup>

#### *Humanity Viewed through Doxological Contrition*

Having laid out the Christological foundations of doxological contrition, Anatolios then sketches an anthropology based on Christ’s salvific work, such that humans can understand their end in Christ as also one of doxological contrition. Anatolios argues that the scriptures portray humankind as created to glorify God, and that Jesus Christ is the human being’s primordial orientation towards praising the divine glory.<sup>704</sup> This clearly reflects the “doxological” part of doxological contrition. However, the “contrition” part comes from the reality of human sin,

---

<sup>700</sup> Ibid, 295.

<sup>701</sup> Ibid, 266.

<sup>702</sup> Ibid, 268.

<sup>703</sup> Ibid, 267.

<sup>704</sup> Ibid, 217. It should be noted how Anatolios characterizes ideal humanity as deified humanity in Christ, rather than an understanding of ideal humanity as pre-Fall perfection independent of Christ. He writes of liturgical hymnography that appeals to a prelapsarian humanity: “Despite these characterizations of an original human intimacy with God and likeness to God, the Byzantine liturgy’s depictions of the original human condition do not, as a general rule, designate that condition as deification. Deification, as we shall see presently, is applied to the condition of the restored, rather than the prelapsarian, humanity. Thus, ultimately, the Byzantine liturgy’s nostalgia for the original condition of humanity is relative and not absolute. It provides an original motivation for lamenting one’s present state of decline, but it also motivates a forward-looking anticipation of a postlapsarian restoration that is depicted in even more glorious terms than the original creation.” (Ibid, 52) As such, Anatolios’s approach to doxological contrition sees humanity’s *telos* as forward-looking in Christ to a deified state, not merely a reversal of the effects of sin. Keeping in line with much of the Eastern tradition’s emphasis on deification rather than human protology, in this chapter, rather than trying to characterize cognitive therapy and positive psychology as participating in an attempt to undo the effects of the Fall on our psychology, I seek to show how they can participate in the effecting of a Christ-like mental state as understood through doxological contrition.

which Anatolios defines as a lie about the glory of God – sin is when humans give glory to something that is not God, and thus actively misrepresent God’s glory.<sup>705</sup> Anatolios fleshes this assertion out by diving deeper into the concept of the image of God, and presents it in rather stark terms, in an important passage:

There is no such choice in humanity’s relationship with God; to be a human being, in the image and likeness of God, is simply to represent God. A human being does not have the choice to turn down that relationship of representation any more than a human being has the choice not to be in the image and likeness of God. The only choice is whether to represent or image the divine glory accurately, thus glorifying God, or to represent it in a distorted and false manner, thereby profaning the glory of God’s name. The latter path is the way of sin, which as a misrepresentation of divine glory is a kind of divine-identity theft that brings harm to the self-identification of God.<sup>706</sup>

Following from this, contrition is not simply feeling sorry for oneself or pleading for forgiveness, but a correction of this “divine-identity theft” by reorientating the human being from false glorification to true glorification of God. Anatolios thus notes the “ominous” consequences of claiming humanity was created in, and has never lost, the image of God – he argues that, sinful or not, humans always represent God, and thus in their sinful state bear the weight of proclaiming a false God.<sup>707</sup> Anatolios further explains how to truly image and represent God as human beings is to image the Son, as there is a natural correlation between the Son and humanity: not only does the Son assume human nature, but humanity is created “in” the Son (as is all of creation).<sup>708</sup> Human existence thus is “intrinsically ordered to the representation of the Son”<sup>709</sup> – humans are made in the image of Christ, and our destined participation in the Trinity is in Christ. When humans sin, humans are lying about Christ, claiming that Christ’s eternal “Yes” to the Father is actually a “No” – sin is thus a counter-proclamation to that of the Trinity.<sup>710</sup> It is

---

<sup>705</sup> Ibid, 238.

<sup>706</sup> Ibid, 238.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid, 243.

<sup>708</sup> Ibid, 239.

<sup>709</sup> Ibid, 241.

<sup>710</sup> Ibid, 243.

through Christ's representative and inclusive doxological contrition that humans are both able to repent from sin and be fully integrated into the intra-Trinitarian glorification.<sup>711</sup>

For humans to be freed from sin and the passions, and thus to properly image God, their wills must be healed. It is by participating in Christ's human will (thus highlighting the profession of Christ's two wills, divine and human) that the human will can be healed and redirected towards God, and not the movements of the passions.<sup>712</sup> By exercising his human will towards suffering and the cross, Christ shows the path towards being liberated from the sway of sin and the passions, and exemplifies a positive role of suffering towards this end – suffering can eradicate sin from the human will by bringing the human to repentance.<sup>713</sup> While this sounds unnecessarily punitive, Anatolios is clear that the issue is about human psychological interiority: suffering can be healing and restorative only to the extent that it reveals an “interiorly felt condemnation of sin.”<sup>714</sup> As Anatolios notes, drawing on the work of Nicholas Cabasilas, all of God's actions towards humanity are intended for “the nurturing and perfecting of the human will” – the cross of Christ heals the human will by drawing humans into participation in the sufferings of Christ, which bring about dispassion through the elicitation of contrition.<sup>715</sup> In doing so, humans once more image Christ and can thus enter into the glorification for which they are destined.

### *Summary*

This presentation of Anatolios's idea of doxological contrition – the repentance stemming from and leading to divine glory, which in Christ effects our salvation – is meant to provide a comprehensive theological account of salvation that is Christologically-centered, thoroughly based in traditional patristic theology, appealing to the inner psychological content of salvation, and focused on the experience of Christ's crucifixion. Doxological contrition is also clearly suitable as a concept upon which to base a participatory relationship between psychological healing and salvation: its very essence is the restoration of humanity's proper representation of God's glory through the healing of the human will and the freeing of humanity from passions.

---

<sup>711</sup> Ibid, 249.

<sup>712</sup> Ibid, 273.

<sup>713</sup> Ibid, 276.

<sup>714</sup> Ibid, 277.

<sup>715</sup> Ibid, 276.

According to this idea, the inner psychological content of Christ's salvific act, enabled by the profession of his fully human mind and will, is a simultaneous repenting of the sin that distances humanity from God, through his own suffering, while embodying the perfect glorifying and imaging of God to which humans are called by approaching his passion in a state of dispassion.

Having expounded on doxological contrition, and its aptitude for characterizing salvation in such a way as to highlight both its Christological roots and its psychological content, it is time to turn to cognitive therapy and positive psychology, such that we can evaluate whether and how these two disciplines of psychological healing and well-being participate in this theological reality of doxological contrition.

### **Aaron Beck and Cognitive Therapy**

Cognitive therapy was developed by Aaron Beck in the 1960s, and is also often called “cognitive behavior therapy” within the field.<sup>716</sup> The essence of cognitive therapy is that the root of all psychological issues, including emotional and behavioral difficulties, is dysfunctional thinking, or thinking that does not correspond to reality. Therefore, if a cognitive therapist wishes to help improve a patient's mood or behavior, the place to start is by addressing their thoughts and thought processes. Primarily, cognitive therapy aims to find and assess a patient's basic beliefs about themselves, other people and their world – if those beliefs are damaging, then helping a patient to change them can produce long-lasting change.<sup>717</sup>

Beck's theory has been empirically supported by much psychotherapeutic literature, and has expanded to address not only depression (its original focus), but other psychological disorders such as anxiety, phobias, and mania.<sup>718</sup> Beck himself describes cognitive therapy in the following way:

---

<sup>716</sup> Judith S. Beck, *Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Basics and Beyond*. Second Edition. (London: The Guilford Press, 2011), 2. For simplicity's sake, I will use the appellation “cognitive therapy” throughout this chapter.

<sup>717</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>718</sup> Aaron T. Beck and David J.A. Dozois, “Cognitive Therapy: Current Status and Future Directions,” *The Annual Review of Medicine* 62 (2010): 399-400.

CT is not the replacement of negative thoughts with positive ones; rather, it aims to help individuals shift their cognitive appraisals from ones that are unhealthy and maladaptive to ones that are evidence-based and adaptive. Essentially, patients learn how to become scientific investigators of their own thinking—to treat thoughts as hypotheses rather than as facts and to put these thoughts to the test.<sup>719</sup>

Cognitive therapy thus addresses what is seen as a dissonance between reality as perceived by the patient, and reality as it is – in other words, it aims to find evidence for the thoughts of the patient through talk-therapy techniques, and to suggest that the patient modify their thoughts based on the accumulated evidence. One of the key parts of cognitive therapy is the active role of the patient, even outside of sessions: as Beck notes, it makes the patients the investigators of their own thought processes, such that when their thinking does change, it is of their own initiative and thus more lasting. Hence, Beck argues for the prophylactic benefits of cognitive therapy: rather than simply helping change incidents of negative thinking, cognitive therapy aims to change deeper cognitive structures such that the patient is less likely to relapse.<sup>720</sup>

Given cognitive therapy’s original focus on depression, let us now briefly look at how Aaron Beck’s approach to cognitive therapy views the causes and thought processes behind depression, and the basic elements of cognition that his therapy aims to correct.

*Beck: Distortions, Schema, and Objectivity*

Beck and co-researcher Brad T. Alford, in their book *Depression: Causes and Treatment*, characterize depression as paradoxical, in that it typically afflicts people with “an astonishing contrast between the depressed person’s image of him- or herself and the objective facts.”<sup>721</sup> Not only do people with depression struggle with excessively negative ideas about themselves, but they are also not easily convinced otherwise by evidence or logic: in fact, they often perform acts

---

<sup>719</sup> Ibid, 400.

<sup>720</sup> Ibid, 403.

<sup>721</sup> Aaron T. Beck and Brad. A. Alford, *Depression: Causes and Treatment*, Second Edition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 3.

to exaggerate their suffering and negative self-image.<sup>722</sup> The behavior patterns of depressed individuals manifest a certain need to suffer, or to reinforce their own negative conceptions.<sup>723</sup> For Beck, the foremost causes of this depressive behavior are cognitive distortions: thoughts that do not merely reflect an error in a patient's thought (as some degree of error is always possible in normal thinking), but rather are thoughts that reflect a systematic error throughout the patient's thoughts that indicates a negative bias against themselves.<sup>724</sup> Cognitive distortions "divert thinking into specific channels that deviate from reality. As a result, the patient perseveres in making negative judgments and misinterpretations."<sup>725</sup> Some types of common cognitive distortions include:

- *Arbitrary inference*: drawing a conclusion from an event when there is either no evidence or contradictory evidence to the conclusion.<sup>726</sup>
- *Selective abstraction*: focusing on a detail out of context, and making the whole of an experience dependent upon this single detail.<sup>727</sup>
- *Overgeneralization*: conceiving a single incident as indicative of a general pattern about one's ability or worth.<sup>728</sup>
- *Exaggeration*: making evaluations that are either gross under- or overestimations of a situation or one's capabilities.<sup>729</sup>
- *Inexact labeling*: using terms with loaded connotations that then reinforce a misleading affective response to an event.<sup>730</sup>

These examples of distorted thinking can negatively affect one's mood and behavior – and thus correcting these distortions can help improve one's negative affect. Beck and Alford argue that cognitive distortions have certain distinctive features: they are "automatic," in that they arise without prior reflection or reasoning; they are "involuntary," in that they occur even if the patient

---

<sup>722</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>723</sup> Ibid, 180.

<sup>724</sup> Ibid, 203-4.

<sup>725</sup> Ibid, 243.

<sup>726</sup> Ibid, 204.

<sup>727</sup> Ibid, 204.

<sup>728</sup> Ibid, 204-5.

<sup>729</sup> Ibid, 205.

<sup>730</sup> Ibid, 205.

does not wish to have them or is trying to avoid them; they are “plausible to the patient,” in that the patients accept the thoughts’ validity uncritically; and they are “persevering,” in that they arise from vastly different types of experiences and persist repetitively in patients’ associations and ruminations.<sup>731</sup>

These automatic, involuntary, plausible, and persistent thoughts thus reinforce what Beck calls the “primary triad:” negative views of the self, the world, and the future.<sup>732</sup> In the minds of depressed persons, the world consistently brings experiences of defeat and disparagement, their selves are deficient and unworthy, and the future promises only a bleak continuation of indefinite suffering.<sup>733</sup> The reinforcement of this triad by cognitive distortions results in the many classic symptoms of depression, such as negative mood, paralysis of will, and suicidal wishes.<sup>734</sup>

Beck and Alford use the concept of “schema” to describe cognitive structures which are derived from experience and, once set, difficult to change. Cognitive distortions create schema which then are used to organize new impressions or experiences, such that negative schema facilitate the interpretation of all experiences through a negative lens – for depressed people, then, “their thought content becomes increasingly saturated with depressive ideas.”<sup>735</sup> Beck and Alford thus identify a reciprocal relationship between negative schemas and negative affective structures: the subjective feeling of depression, caused by cognitive distortions of certain life experiences, activates any negative schemas that have become entrenched in the patient’s mind, which then lead to more cognitive distortions and create a downward spiral. Beck and Alford summarize it in laymen’s terms: “the more negatively patients think, the worse they feel; the worse they feel, the more negatively they think.”<sup>736</sup> This is what creates the aforementioned “paradoxical” relationship between the objective circumstances of the patient and their own sense of self – the negative feedback spiral caused by distorted schemas leads to a loss of objectivity about the self.

---

<sup>731</sup> Ibid, 205-6.

<sup>732</sup> Ibid, 225-6.

<sup>733</sup> Ibid, 226.

<sup>734</sup> Ibid, 226.

<sup>735</sup> Ibid, 256-7.

<sup>736</sup> Ibid, 262.

Cognitive therapy aims to assist patients in increasing their objectivity about themselves, the world, and the future, to break this negative feedback spiral.<sup>737</sup> Cognitive therapy in practice thus gives patients the tools to investigate their own thoughts and to test them against reality. This is primarily done through a Socratic-method-style talk therapy in which the therapist and the patient deconstruct the patient's negative thoughts.<sup>738</sup> Cognitive therapy thus requires a dynamic relationship between the therapist and patient, in which the patient's ever-changing problems are met by an ever-evolving conceptualization of their problems – the therapist needs to be flexible and persistent in refining their own understanding of the patient, such that they can more readily help the patient test their distorted views of self against empirical evidence.<sup>739</sup> Judith S. Beck calls cognitive therapy “collaborative empiricism,” as the therapist and the patient actively participate together in exercises meant to uncover empirical evidence that challenges cognitive distortions and supports replacement beliefs.<sup>740</sup>

Cognitive therapy can thus be characterized as “healing” in that it changes the thought processes of patients so as to drastically improve their subjective affective experience. By showing the patient how their thinking is at the root of their depressive feelings, challenging and correcting their automatic negative thoughts, and shaking up their distorted schemas, cognitive therapy enables the patient to affirm evidence-based thoughts that are often more reasonable and less affectively damaging. Let us now examine how this psychotherapeutic practice could participate in the theological notion of doxological contrition.

#### *Doxological Contrition as Representation and Dispassion*

As per our Christological method, to say psychology participates in theology is to identify an asymmetrical relationship between the two disciplines: the disciplines are differentiated in their methods and concepts, but there is also an inherent unity between them (which we have identified as concerning the same subject of human personhood). Asymmetry also means that the differences between psychology and theology are differences in kind, and that psychology draws its being from theology. To say cognitive therapy participates in doxological contrition, then, is

---

<sup>737</sup> Ibid, 308.

<sup>738</sup> Ibid, 300-2.

<sup>739</sup> Judith Beck, *Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Basics and Beyond*, 7.

<sup>740</sup> Ibid, 10.

to say that cognitive therapy finds its ultimate existence and meaning in doxological contrition. In our examination of cognitive therapy, several key points reveal themselves as essential to seeing how cognitive therapy can participate in the salvific, Christological reality of doxological contrition.

Firstly, as we saw in Anatolios's work, a key element of the "contrition" in doxological contrition is the recognition that the human person is imaging God in all that they do, and thus in one's sinful state one is misrepresenting (and thus lying about) the divine glory. Sin is a distorting influence, in that we image God in a distorted way. In Christ, we are both shown how to and enabled to properly glorify God in an undistorted way, such that we truly image God in all that we do. This problem of distortion runs common to both doxological contrition and cognitive therapy: in cognitive therapy, there is a recognition that cognitive distortions are not profitable for human existence, and misrepresent reality to the patient. Both cognitive therapy and doxological contrition thus emphasize the correction of error with the aim towards true reality – cognitive therapy thus participates in doxological contrition to the degree that its methods aim to correct erroneous and harmful negative thoughts, which obscure and deprecate one's own self, and thus theologically obscure and attack the glory of God for which one is created to represent.

Anatolios argues that Christ's representative repentance on the cross is what heals humanity's sinful "misrepresentation and desecration of the Father's glory."<sup>741</sup> Indeed, repentance, like contrition, accurately characterizes the transformation of the human person's distorted imaging of God into the proper imaging of God. Some may be hesitant to characterize cognitive therapy as facilitating repentance, however – depressive patients are not necessarily guilty of sin, in this view, and to characterize their therapy as repentance is to make them responsible for their own depression. However, I think the term repentance applies here. Repentance is not primarily about sorrow over sin or admission of guilt (though these are not excluded from repentance), but could be defined as "a change in a person's way of thinking and manner of life."<sup>742</sup> Repentance is about change, specifically a change in one's behavior and attitude. Anatolios argues that repentance is not fundamentally about negative attitudes towards sin, but is turning from our

---

<sup>741</sup> Anatolios, *Deification through the Cross*, 262.

<sup>742</sup> Alexis Trader, *Ancient Christian Wisdom and Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy: A Meeting of Minds*, 78.

pleasure in sin towards God's love.<sup>743</sup> And cognitive therapy is certainly a practice aimed at repentance in this way, as it aims to change the patient's negative distorted thinking into more evidence-based, non-maladaptive thinking. Also, the cognitive model employed by cognitive therapy gives the patient an active role in their own depression – while their thoughts may be automatic and involuntary, they are given tools to change their thinking, such that their depression is defeated precisely by changing its perception from an external affliction to a manageable internal habit. In this way, I would argue that cognitive therapy participates in doxological contrition in that it identifies the psychological issues and paths of healing that are crucial for personal repentance.

To this end, there are clear parallels between cognitive distortions and the passions, as the latter are defined as distortions on the will away from virtue and towards evil.<sup>744</sup> Alexis Trader, whom we examined in Chapter 4, identifies these parallels succinctly:

In spiritual terms, divine grace present in a liturgical setting together with the transfiguring power of Christ's teachings bring about repentance: a change in a person's way of thinking and manner of life... In cognitive therapy, Beck notes that a patient's distortion of reality and illogical thinking can be corrected in the therapeutic session by objectively appraising reality and examining the logical consistency between a person's premises and conclusions.<sup>745</sup>

After noting these similarities, however, Trader settles for an approach of mutual illumination: understanding cognitive therapy can help understand the patristic account of the passions, and vice versa.<sup>746</sup> I have already critiqued Trader's approach as comparing two different types of psychology, one modern and one ancient, rather than an asymmetrical relationship that would allow for unity and participation between psychological concepts and theological concepts. However, I argue that the fight against cognitive distortions does participate in doxological contrition, and Anatolios's emphasis on dispassion (the state of freedom from distorting passions

---

<sup>743</sup> Anatolios, *Deification through the Cross*, 288.

<sup>744</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>745</sup> Trader, *Ancient Christian Wisdom and Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy*, 78.

<sup>746</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

of the will) is useful here. Dispassion is not merely a psychological state (though it certainly has psychological implications), but is fundamentally a Christ-like state, revealed in Christ through his own Passion. Passions are a distortion of the will, but Christ heals the human will through its proper exercise in obedience to God unto the cross.<sup>747</sup> Dispassion, Anatolios argues, is thus the concrete experience of Christian salvation.<sup>748</sup> Cognitive therapy therefore participates in the human person's attainment of dispassion by revealing the distortions of the will, and enabling them to correct these distortions. One might argue that cognitive therapy is within one's own power, while salvation is a gift of grace from Christ – however, I would argue that this is a “both...and” situation. Participation does not mean one reality abrogates another, but as I have shown in Part 2 of this thesis, implies a non-competitive co-working of the finite and the infinite. The finite practice of cognitive therapy can thus fully participate in the Christological saving work of freeing the believer from passions.

To add one more aspect to this relationship between the passions and cognitive distortions: Anatolios notes that the “Christus Victor” motif is used in the Byzantine liturgy to give concrete experiential content to worshippers in their own lives, as Christ becomes victorious over their own passions as well.<sup>749</sup> Browning makes an explicit connection between “Christus Victor” and psychotherapy in arguing that “Christus Victor” is helpful for articulating the role of the healer (therapist) with the sufferer (patient), and for articulating the helplessness of sufferers that is experienced as being possessed by powers over which they have no control.<sup>750</sup> This is certainly the experience of depressive patients who struggle with automatic, involuntary, and persistent negative thoughts. Therefore, another implication of the participatory relationship between cognitive therapy and the dispassion of doxological contrition is that the Christological experience of victory over powers of oppression can inform both the correcting of cognitive distortions and the freedom from the passions – and likewise, the importance of the therapist-patient relationship participates, in a very real way, in the Christ-believer relationship.

---

<sup>747</sup> Anatolios, *Deification through the Cross*, 273.

<sup>748</sup> *Ibid*, 57.

<sup>749</sup> *Ibid*, 58.

<sup>750</sup> Don S. Browning, *Reviving Christian Humanism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 33.

### *Concluding Thoughts on Cognitive Therapy and Doxological Contrition*

There are clear parallels between the practice of cognitive therapy and the Christological notion of doxological contrition, especially as the latter is expressed through dispassion. As such, I have argued that cognitive therapy can be said to participate in doxological contrition, as its correcting of distorted thoughts participates in the reality of correcting human distorted imaging of God. One way in which cognitive therapy could even more fully participate in doxological contrition, however, is in recognizing that the goal of human well-being – the image to which it aspires to correct its distortions – is Christ. To this end, Trader makes a perceptive critique when discussing the idea of schema-replacement, when therapists offer new schema to patients to replace their challenged maladaptive ones:

Although most of the examples given in cognitive therapy manuals for clinicians are reasonable and result in an improvement in the patient's quality of life, it is certainly conceivable for some suggestions for schematic replacement to clash with the Christian virtues of humility, chastity, patience, and self-sacrifice for the sake of the love of God.<sup>751</sup>

Trader goes on to say that “in the Church, ‘schema-modification’ is always a value-driven process aimed at nothing less than the very likeness of God revealed in Christ Jesus.”<sup>752</sup> While cognitive therapy does set goals for patients, and aims to replace maladaptive cognitive patterns with healthy ones, it is fundamentally a negative endeavor, so to speak, in that its focus is on the correcting of distorted and unhealthy thinking – not the encouragement of moral thinking. The best cognitive therapy can hope to achieve is evidence-based thinking, but this is not exactly the same as dispassion, as Anatolios describes it. For cognitive therapy to truly participate in doxological contrition, it must recognize that its correcting of distortions serves not only to make humans think in accordance with reality, but for them to change their thinking into a state of Christ-like dispassion.

---

<sup>751</sup> Trader, *Ancient Christian Wisdom and Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy*, 237.

<sup>752</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

Cognitive therapy, in practice, is remarkably *telos*-neutral – while obviously aiming for human well-being, and the healing of maladaptive thought patterns, it does not advise on how its patients should think outside of their thought according with empirical evidence. The goals it sets with patients are chosen by the patient, and the testing of thoughts is ultimately carried out by the patient. Doxological contrition, with its focus on healing the image of God distorted by sin in humans, can bring that focus to cognitive therapy such that its practices can participate even more fully in the salvific reality of un-distorting the image of Christ in humanity.

Positive psychology, by contrast, wears its values on its sleeve – its aim is to identify the virtues and traits that make life worth living, and to provide prescriptions for human flourishing. Let us now turn to positive psychology, as seen through the thought of its founder, Martin Seligman, to see what character a participatory relationship between positive psychology and doxological contrition can take.

### **Martin Seligman and Positive Psychology**

The term “positive psychology” was first used by Abraham Maslow in 1954, but became reintroduced and popularized on a wider scale by Martin Seligman in the late 1990s. In both cases, the term was used to criticize the contemporary state of psychology as obsessively focused with the negative side of the human condition: positive psychology, by contrast, focuses on the good side of humanity, including virtues, strengths, and general well-being.<sup>753</sup> Positive psychology is about what it means to live the good life, not just how to deal with suffering.<sup>754</sup> After all, Seligman argues, health is not merely the absence of disease – psychological well-being should thus not merely be the alleviation of psychological disorders and distress.<sup>755</sup> Seligman goes on to cite a number of studies that, taken together, lead to the conclusion that “subjective well-being, as measured by optimism and other positive emotions, protects one from physical illness.”<sup>756</sup> He argues that research inspired by positive psychology has shown that

---

<sup>753</sup> Matthew W. Gallagher and Shane J. Lopez, “Strengthening Positive Psychology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, edited by C.R. Snyder, Shane J. Lopez, Lisa M. Edwards, and Susana C. Marques (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 3.

<sup>754</sup> Martin Seligman, “Positive Psychology: A Personal History,” *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* 15 (2019): 3.

<sup>755</sup> Martin Seligman, “Positive Health,” *Applied Psychology* 57,1 (2008): 4.

<sup>756</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

happiness is just as often a cause of desirable outcomes in life, rather than simply a consequence of desirable outcomes.<sup>757</sup>

Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, in their introduction to positive psychology, argue for a type of psychology that is not a “victimology”<sup>758</sup> but rather studies human strengths and virtues,<sup>759</sup> and investigates what entails positive experiences, positive personalities, and positive social contexts.<sup>760</sup> They write: “the majority of ‘normal’ people also need examples and advice to reach a richer and more fulfilling existence.”<sup>761</sup> Positive psychology professes to study these positive aspects of human existence through “scientific” methods that largely stem from cognitive psychological methods, such as patient self-reporting of thoughts<sup>762</sup> – as such, positive psychology is not mutually exclusive from cognitive therapy, and the methods of the latter often inform the former. To explore the findings and methods of positive psychology further, we will turn to Martin Seligman’s work on the importance of positivity, strengths and flourishing to psychological well-being, and examine whether and how positive psychology can thus participate in the Christological idea of doxological contrition.

### *Seligman: Positivity, Strengths, and Positive Psychotherapy*

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi define positive psychology as being about “valued subjective experiences.”<sup>763</sup> These include contentment, flow, optimism, and virtues at both the individual and group level.<sup>764</sup> While “well-being” as a broad construct is not approachable, Seligman argues that well-being has several measurable elements that contribute to it, and identifying these elements and measuring them is the object of positive psychology.<sup>765</sup> For Seligman, there are five essential elements of human well-being, each of which are pursued by humans for their own

---

<sup>757</sup> Seligman, “Positive Psychology: A Personal History,” 12.

<sup>758</sup> Martin E. P. Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “Positive Psychology: An Introduction,” *American Psychologist* 55,1 (2000): 6.

<sup>759</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>760</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>761</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>762</sup> Christina A. Downey and Reggie E. Henderson, “Speculation, Conceptualization, or Evidence?: A History of Positive Psychology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, edited by C.R. Snyder, Shane J. Lopez, Lisa M. Edwards, and Susana C. Marques (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 13-4.

<sup>763</sup> Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, “Positive Psychology: An Introduction,” 5.

<sup>764</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>765</sup> Martin E.P. Seligman, *Flourish: A New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being* (New York: Free Press, 2011), 25.

sake and measurable independently of the other elements: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (he uses the acronym PERMA).<sup>766</sup> Positive emotion is defined as one's subjective measure of happiness and life satisfaction.<sup>767</sup> Engagement is approached as the retrospective assessment of one's pleasure while in a "flow state," a state of concentrated attention in an activity that requires all cognitive and emotional resources in the moment.<sup>768</sup> Relationships are included to emphasize that well-being is rarely solitary, and that other people often define the high points of people's lives.<sup>769</sup> Meaning is defined as "belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than the self."<sup>770</sup> And accomplishment is defined as achieving one's goals for their own sake, rather than for monetary or status-based ends.<sup>771</sup> By creating experiments to measure these five elements in human lives, Seligman argues that positive psychology can better understand what truly makes humans happy.<sup>772</sup>

Another project of Seligman's, conducted with Christopher Peterson, is his study of character strengths, meant to "reclaim the study of character and virtue as legitimate topics of psychological inquiry."<sup>773</sup> Peterson's and Seligman's stated aim is to provide a counterpoint to the highly influential psychology manuals *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* and *International Classification of Diseases (ICD)* – instead, they propose a manual of psychological health, in which strengths and weaknesses can be scientifically examined and understood.<sup>774</sup> To identify these character strengths, Peterson and Seligman first conduct a survey of the virtues that are found in the literatures of the world traditions of China, South Asia (largely India), and the West (including both Greek philosophy and the Abrahamic faiths). The six core virtues they identify as ubiquitous among world traditions are courage, justice, humanity, temperance, transcendence, and wisdom<sup>775</sup> – each is also assigned a list of

---

<sup>766</sup> Ibid, 26-30.

<sup>767</sup> Ibid, 26-7.

<sup>768</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>769</sup> Ibid, 130.

<sup>770</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>771</sup> Ibid, 28-9.

<sup>772</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>773</sup> Christopher Peterson and Martin E. P. Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 3.

<sup>774</sup> Ibid, 3-4.

<sup>775</sup> Ibid, 33.

character strengths that fall under the umbrella of that virtue.<sup>776</sup> By identifying commonalities between these traditions as to moral virtues, Peterson and Seligman claim a scientific and objective rationale for their choices in the project:

Our survey of influential religious and philosophical traditions reveals six broad virtue classes to be ubiquitous. This conclusion has important implications for our attempt to classify positive traits. Most significantly, we have a nonarbitrary basis for focusing on certain virtues rather than others. Much of the ongoing societal discourse on “character” is tilted in one direction or another by less than universal political and personal values. Although our classification is decidedly about such values, it is descriptive of what is ubiquitous, rather than prescriptive or idiosyncratic.<sup>777</sup>

Not content with simply claiming ubiquity as a scientific basis for studying these six virtues, Peterson and Seligman propose evolutionary explanations for their ubiquity, including that these might be cultural characteristics that are selected for among long-lived and civilized societies, or that these virtues are inherently biological. They suggest:

These particular styles of behaving may have emerged, been selected for, and been sustained because each allows a crucial survival problem to be solved. Without biologically predisposed mechanisms that allowed our ancestors to generate, recognize, and celebrate corrective virtues, their social groups would have died out quickly. The ubiquitous virtues, we believe, are what allow the human animal to struggle against and to triumph over what is darkest within us.<sup>778</sup>

Such *post facto* evolutionary explanations for virtues may not be compelling, but what is important presently in considering these quotes is not their validity (which is questionable) but the way they style the aims of the project. These quotes show that positive psychology, as

---

<sup>776</sup> Ibid, 29-30.

<sup>777</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>778</sup> Ibid, 52.

Seligman and his collaborators understand it, is an attempt to propose scientific explanations and methods for investigating what has typically been seen as the domain of philosophy, or the other humanities disciplines, and thus provide “scientific” evidence for their objects of investigations. Peterson and Seligman describe their project as “the social science equivalent of virtue ethics, using the scientific method to inform philosophical pronouncements about the traits of a good person.”<sup>779</sup> Seligman has been able to investigate virtue and character strengths through questionnaires, survey research, and applied psychological studies.<sup>780</sup>

However, positive psychology is not just about background research on human well-being – there is also a psychotherapeutic aspect to it, which applies the above insights to patient healing and well-being. Positive psychotherapy, as Seligman *et al.* call it, aims to treat depression and other disorders not only by mitigating its negative symptoms, but by directly emphasizing and building positive emotions and character strengths. Seligman *et al.* suggest that positive psychotherapy could prevent relapses by strengthening the patient’s positive resources for counteracting negative symptoms.<sup>781</sup> They argue that positive emotions and positive action can amplify each other, creating an upward spiral of well-being, in contrast to the common depressive downward spiral.<sup>782</sup>

Seligman *et al.* argue that humans are naturally biased toward attending to negativity, and thus positive psychotherapy techniques are geared towards redirecting a patient’s attention from negative aspects of life to positive and hopeful aspects.<sup>783</sup> Positive psychotherapeutic exercises include:

- Each night, writing down three good things that happened that day
- Finding out one’s strengths (through a questionnaire) and thinking of ways to apply them in daily life
- Expressing gratitude to someone in a formal visit or letter

---

<sup>779</sup> Ibid, 89.

<sup>780</sup> Seligman, “Positive Psychology: A Personal History,” 11-2.

<sup>781</sup> Martin E.P. Seligman, Tayyab Rashid, and Acacia C. Parks, “Positive Psychotherapy,” *American Psychologist* 61,8 (2006): 775.

<sup>782</sup> Ibid, 777.

<sup>783</sup> Ibid, 783.

- Savoring something each day that is normally hurried through (like a meal)
- Reacting in visibly positive and enthusiastic ways to other people’s news

The goal of the positive psychotherapist, then, is to set these exercises for the patients and help guide the patients on how to do them more constructively. An important part of this job is helping the patients identify their signature strengths, and then directing them to activities in which they can then participate in a more engaged manner.<sup>784</sup> Seligman *et al.* write:

Although we do not ignore clients’ concerns about their “deficiencies,” lest as therapists we may seem unfeeling and unsympathetic toward troubles, we emphasize identifying, attending to, remembering, and using more often the core positive traits that clients already possess. This may produce “end-runs” around their perceived faults, faults they know all too well... In addition to increasing clients’ general awareness of strengths, we coach them on how to explicitly employ their signature strengths to counter depression.<sup>785</sup>

Much like in cognitive therapy, the patient’s active participation is important: the healing that positive psychotherapy brings comes from the patient’s own changing of their thought processes, and from attending specifically to positive aspects about their life instead of negative ones. Concepts such as forgiveness, gratitude, hope, and savoring are introduced to patients as techniques to transform negative or neutral experiences into positive emotions.<sup>786</sup> Seligman argues that other talk therapies are difficult, unpleasurable, and hard to incorporate into one’s life – by contrast, positive psychotherapy’s techniques are aimed at practical incorporation into the patient’s life, and are meant to feel good.<sup>787</sup>

### *Is Positive Psychology Only Positive?*

Before engaging Seligman’s positive psychology with doxological contrition, one more point needs to be addressed, which is the conception that positive psychology exclusively focuses on

---

<sup>784</sup> Ibid, 777.

<sup>785</sup> Ibid, 784.

<sup>786</sup> Seligman, *Flourish*, 47-8.

<sup>787</sup> Ibid, 52.

only one side of human experience – the positive – while undervaluing the other, negative side. This is something that positive psychology, as a discipline, has always struggled to clarify within its own ranks – P. Alex Linley *et al.* note that there has been a substantial “happiology” faction within positive psychology, who argue for researching and fostering positivity at the exclusion of negativity.<sup>788</sup> Linley *et al.*, by contrast, argue that positive psychology is inherently integrative, and that the focus on human strength and virtues means taking a holistic look at human life.<sup>789</sup> Nevertheless, there are still calls from within the field for positive psychology to be more “balanced” – as Rhea L. Owens notes, positive psychology’s initial aim was to bring balance to a psychology that was seen as exclusively focused on disorders and problems, and it is currently settling on finding that balance of addressing the positive aspects of humanity in a more comprehensive manner.<sup>790</sup>

Jonathan Haidt, in his notable positive psychology book *The Happiness Hypothesis*, tries to use a positive psychological focus that nevertheless addresses a more balanced picture of human life. Haidt, taking a similar approach to Peterson and Seligman above, identifies ten traditional ideas about human happiness,<sup>791</sup> and synthesizes them into a “happiness formula:”  $H=S+C+V$  (happiness = biological starting point + conditions of your life + voluntary activities you do).<sup>792</sup> This approach acknowledges the comprehensive nature of happiness, that it comes from both within oneself and from outside forces, and that these forces need not all be positive. For Haidt, what is especially important for happiness is coherence among your “life stories,” or the added factors above – if your biological disposition, your life circumstances, and the choices you are making do not cohere (meaning that they contradict or work against each other) then happiness will be difficult. In this sense, Haidt attributes a positive role to suffering, as suffering is often

---

<sup>788</sup> Alex M. Wood, Adam T. Davidson, P. Alex Linley, John Maltby, Susan Harrington, and Stephen Joseph, “Applications of Positive Psychology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, edited by C.R. Snyder, Shane J. Lopez, Lisa M. Edwards, and Susana C. Marques (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 44.

<sup>789</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>790</sup> Rhea L. Owens, “The Future of Positive Psychology: A Bright Outlook,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, edited by C.R. Snyder, Shane J. Lopez, Lisa M. Edwards, and Susana C. Marques (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 969.

<sup>791</sup> Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis: Putting Ancient Wisdom to the Test of Modern Science* (London: W. Heinemann, 2006), x-xi.

<sup>792</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

the catalyst for the breakdown of non-coherent life stories, thus enabling people to find a new coherence within their biological, psychological, and social lives.<sup>793</sup>

Seligman also picks up on this idea of the positivity of suffering when referring to a course meant to inspire post-traumatic growth in soldiers suffering from trauma. As Seligman makes clear, trauma must not be celebrated – rather, psychologists need to understand how “trauma often sets the stage for growth,” and thus the psychotherapist’s job is to inform the soldiers about the conditions under which growth can most likely occur, and help them navigate that process.<sup>794</sup> So while suffering is not considered a positive occurrence, psychotherapists can still effect a positive response in patients out of the suffering. Thus, it is fairer to say that positive psychology does not exclude the negative aspects of human existence, but it rather does not see simply fixing the negative as the full aim of psychotherapy – the focus always stays on concrete, positive aspects of existence. The question now is, how can this discipline of positive psychology, expressed as a healing discipline through positive psychotherapy, participate in the Christological notion of doxological contrition?

#### *Doxological Contrition as Glorifying God*

We have already seen a Christian response to positive psychology above, in the work of Charry and Kosits, who argue for the benefits of positive psychology for highlighting Christianity’s joyful and human-positive aspects over its dourer ones. Christianity, Charry and Kosits argue, often focuses on the negative side of human experience, emphasizing human weakness and the need for the common good.<sup>795</sup> While none of these emphases of Christianity are inherently contradictory with positive psychology – Charry and Kosits argue, and I agree, that positive psychology is capable of accommodating negativity in its system<sup>796</sup> – Charry and Kosits desire to refocus Christianity away from its more negative stereotypes towards a more positive vision of theology:

---

<sup>793</sup> Ibid, 144; 227.

<sup>794</sup> Seligman, *Flourish*, 149-50.

<sup>795</sup> Charry and Kosits, “Christian theology and positive psychology,” 469.

<sup>796</sup> Ibid, 476.

Christian theological rhetoric has sometimes suggested that the moral foundation of society requires a personality type that is meek, humble and self-giving, at times to the point of countenancing excessive self-denial, self-abnegation, contempt for physical pleasure and perhaps even self-hatred as expressions of devotion to God, in order to persuade people how great God is compared to oneself. This rhetoric of extreme humility can be harmful however, if interpreted as discouraging both moral and social effort and fostering self-destructive passivity and helplessness...psychology can help theology claim flourishing, strength and pleasure within its own theistic framework of humility and self-giving.<sup>797</sup>

As mentioned above, while Charry's and Kosits's worry is well-explained, it is also problematic to emphasize only the "positive"<sup>798</sup> side of theology at the expense of the very real Christian theological focus on the negative side of the human condition. I would not disagree with the essentials of what Charry and Kosits argue here, especially when arguing for a positive psychological emphasis *within* a framework of humility and self-giving. What I will question is whether the characterization of Christian personality that Charry and Kosits offer here, particularly with its supposedly "negative" qualities, is actually a fair characterization of how Christianity sees the negative aspects of human life. Charry and Kosits view this presented personality type as problematic, and thus turn to explicit positive psychological qualities and language like "flourishing" as a response. I also view this personality type as problematic, but my response is not to simply emphasize "positive" aspects of theology, but to dive deeper into what sort of personality type the humble and self-giving Christian actually must possess, even with respect to psychologically "negative" aspects and language.

This is why I engage with doxological contrition, as it is a Christologically-informed notion that accepts the harsh and seemingly "negative" language of the cross and suffering, especially in a psychological sense, but places it within a larger framework that is theologically grounded and ultimately salvific. Doxological contrition takes seriously the "lowliness of the desolation of

---

<sup>797</sup> Ibid, 471.

<sup>798</sup> I put positive in quote marks here to imply that what Charry and Kosits view as positive in theology happens to be what positive psychology has identified as positive – not what theology sees as positive on its own terms.

human sinfulness,” while in the same breath arguing that it is “taken up in the majesty of divine love and forgiveness.”<sup>799</sup> It is not simply a matter of emphasizing one or the other, because both are absolutely necessary for salvation – the doxological contrition of Christ “precisely measures the distance between the sordidness of sin and the glory of God.”<sup>800</sup> Without an understanding of that distance, salvation is not possible: doxological contrition requires that contrition arises from an experience of glory, in which the believer recognizes how far he or she is from that glory, and thus can truly cry for deliverance and mercy to be taken up into that glory.<sup>801</sup>

Thus, I do not agree with relating positive psychology and theology in such a way that leads to an exclusive emphasis on the “positive” aspects of Christian theology. To be fair, Charry and Kosits do present examples of positive psychology engaging with supposedly “negative” themes like repentance, weakness, and self-examination, even if the tenor of their overall critiques is to emphasize human “flourishing” against negative theological stereotypes.<sup>802</sup> By starting our comparison with doxological contrition, however, we can engage positive psychology with the very heart of why Christianity requires focus on the distance between sin and glory. And indeed, I argue that positive psychology participates in doxological contrition, per my Christological method, insofar as it leads human beings to recognize the glory to which they are called, such that their distance from that glory can be recognized and contrition can arise.

Anatolios argues that the normative soteriology of the ecumenical councils is deification through “graced inclusion into trinitarian life.”<sup>803</sup> This deification happens through Christ, and particularly through the cross, in which we see Christ “overcoming our estrangement from God through his suffering obedience and submission to the Father.”<sup>804</sup> As such, this deification requires subjecting our wills to God in like manner as Christ.<sup>805</sup> But it is ultimately a deification for glory, and Anatolios emphasizes that all of the “negative” aspects of salvation – the suffering, the judgment against sin, the self-giving obedience – all serve the “positive” aspect of

---

<sup>799</sup> Anatolios, *Deification through the Cross*, 169.

<sup>800</sup> *Ibid*, 169.

<sup>801</sup> *Ibid*, 75.

<sup>802</sup> Charry and Kosits, “Christian theology and positive psychology,” 474-6.

<sup>803</sup> Anatolios, *Deification through the Cross*, 143.

<sup>804</sup> *Ibid*, 160.

<sup>805</sup> *Ibid*, 225.

representing Christ and his glory as his image in an undistorted way, and thus being reintegrated into the glory of the Trinity.

One can see the reticence by some, then, to engage positive psychology with theology. After all, if most psychology is “victimology,” against which positive psychology’s founders argued, then there is an obvious connection between most psychology and Christianity – for Christianity, we are all sinners, and so simply focusing on the positive misses something vital to human well-being. There is no “normal” (to use Seligman’s term) humanity in this sense that is not also in desperate need of salvation. However, the picture of positive psychology I have presented from Seligman and his collaborators is still very important for recognizing the importance of starting from the ideal and working backwards: contrition can only arise out of doxology, and for Seligman, in order to assess what is bad for humanity one must have a vision for what is good for humanity. Insofar as Seligman’s positive psychology helps identify the good, the true, and the beautiful in human lives, it participates in the soteriological reality of doxological contrition.

As such, a focus on positive emotions, relationships, meaning, engagement, and accomplishments helps orient humans to goodness in themselves and in others. Identifying virtues and character strengths not only enables humans to be happier, but can also cast light on the ways in which humans do not measure up to the ideal, thus inspiring repentance. Gratitude, savoring, and doing things for others are practices, affirmed by positive psychotherapy, which can embody the self-giving of Christ in the believer. An especially interesting insight from positive psychologists is the positive role of suffering, as Seligman and Haidt note. The idea that suffering can create better conditions for personal growth has a clear connection with the theological idea that suffering eradicates sin from the human will. As Anatolios argues, Christ’s suffering has salvific efficacy, and his passion is a formal cause of our salvation<sup>806</sup> – how we respond to suffering is thus crucial to our salvation. Anatolios writes:

Those who have communion with Christ, therefore, are also freed from condemnation, not because Christ was condemned as a substitute for their just condemnation, but because in Christ they can now also “use” the passibility of

---

<sup>806</sup> Ibid, 17-8; 78.

pain and death, in a passionless mode, to forsake and condemn sin and progress toward deification.<sup>807</sup>

Pain and suffering are not good in this understanding, but can rather be used towards good ends by the dispassionate believer – likewise, positive psychologists see suffering as creating opportunities for growth. In both cases, what is crucial is not the suffering itself but the response to suffering: dispassion in the case of salvation (which does not preclude pain, but sets its sight on freedom and glory in God), and a new coherence of life stories in the case of positive psychology. In both cases as well, it is not something the individual does alone: the therapist guides the patient through the post-traumatic growth, and Christ enables the human will to be healed for dispassion. In this way and in others, positive psychology, insofar as it makes the goal of human well-being primary in determining healing and approaches, participates in doxological contrition, as it is not simply about avoiding negativity, but finding the ways in which positive results can arise from negative circumstances – just like the salvation effected through the cross.

#### *Concluding Thoughts on Positive Psychology and Doxological Contrition*

In this section, I have presented Martin Seligman’s approach to positive psychology and asked whether and how it might participate in the Christological idea of doxological contrition. In doing so, I have contrasted my approach to relating positive psychology and theology to the approach presented in the article by Charry and Kosits. Rather than shy away from the heavily negative language used by Christian theology to focus on a positive-psychology-informed language of Christian flourishing, I argue for affirming that negative language precisely because it stems from the truly positive vision of human glory in God. The former approach seems to almost be ashamed of the cross – the latter approach affirms the meaning of Christ crucified for bridging the distance between human desolation and human salvation. Doxological contrition thus serves as a perfect framework for examining positive psychology, as it puts this Christian focus on the cross front and center, and shows both the issues with an excessively “positive” positive psychology, and the deep resonances between positive psychotherapy’s aims and doxological contrition’s aim of glory as mediated through the cross.

---

<sup>807</sup> Ibid, 175-6.

That being said, I am in agreement with Charry and Kosits when they argue that Christianity brings a specific value-system that positive psychology, and other disciplines of psychology, should not ignore in the pursuit of being “scientific” or “objective” – after all, they argue, all disciplines are value- and worldview-laden, and this especially includes psychology.<sup>808</sup> Seligman certainly desires that positive psychology be a “science,” in that it bases its conclusions on empirical observations and quantifiable data. Hence, his syncretic approach to virtues and character strengths, drawing from all world religions, is portrayed not only as more objective – in that ubiquity is supposedly an unbiased ground for truth – but it even suggests these values to be evolutionarily determined. Christ, however, is the *telos* of Christian well-being – doxological contrition as salvation is thoroughly and completely Christological, and our intended glory, from which we are separated by sin such that we must repent, is Christ’s glory. Salvation, as the asymmetrical analogue of human well-being, does not exist in this theological framework apart from Christ. It is thus Christ who is the measure of salvation, and by analogy the measure of our well-being. Positive psychology, in order to thus fully participate in doxological contrition, must see Christ as its end point for human flourishing. Positive psychotherapy’s techniques, its emphasis on positivity, its encouragement of virtue, and its responsiveness to suffering, are all thoroughly compatible with Christianity and, from the perspective of my Christological method, can be said to draw their very being and efficacy from Christ’s work of doxological contrition. But in order for human well-being and salvation to be true analogues, the well-being must point towards salvation – and that means that well-being must point to Christ in its very essence. Positive psychology, then, can be said to participate in doxological contrition to the extent that it focuses on *telos* of human well-being as informed by the work of Christ.

## **Conclusion**

In the introduction of this chapter, I posed the questions: what is the significance of Christ crucified for a person’s ideal mental state; and how can psychological practices that focus on mental health and well-being be related to a theology that appears to focus on suffering and self-denial? To answer these questions, I introduced Khaled Anatolios’s notion of doxological contrition, which is thoroughly informed by Christ’s crucifixion, and argued for a relationship of

---

<sup>808</sup> Charry and Kosits, “Christian theology and positive psychology,” 477.

participation between psychologies of mental well-being and doxological contrition, given the long Christian history of seeing healing as participating in salvation. The two psychotherapeutic disciplines I chose to investigate were cognitive therapy and positive psychology, and I argued that both can be understood to participate in doxological contrition, insofar as each of them analogously emphasizes in their healing approach a particular pole of the concept: cognitive therapy emphasizes the contrition aspect, while positive psychology emphasizes the doxological aspect, though the two cannot truly be separated. All of that said, I will now answer the questions I posed at the outset.

In the psychology of Christ on the cross, the mind of Christ precisely measures the distance between the desolation of human sin and the glory of God. Christ's psychological suffering is not one of suffering for suffering's sake, but is rather the natural outgrowth of God's glory in the presence of the weight of the sins of humanity: as Anatolios notes, "contrition is the form that the human glorification of God takes in the face of human sin."<sup>809</sup> Sin can only be truly known in the face of glory, and so repentance – and thus salvation – can only truly occur in the light of God's glory. Christ's contrition is vicarious for all human sin, and thus his crucifixion brings together the twin poles of human glory as inclusion in the Trinity, and human estrangement from God as expressed literally in the murder of God.<sup>810</sup> The psychological importance of the cross is thus not primarily found in concepts like guilt, or shame, or self-denial for the sake of self-denial – while these concepts are certainly possible to discuss with respect to the cross, it is better to approach the cross from the underlying mechanism of salvation that is being effected. By bringing the very depths of humanity into divine glory, Christ enables us to properly image God and thus to repent of our distorted will and passions and enter into the freedom and glory of God.

As demonstrated above, cognitive therapy identifies the ways in which human thinking is distorted, teaching strategies that bring freedom from maladaptive thought patterns to the patient – thus it can participate in the salvific work of repentance, liberation from the passions, and restoring the proper imaging of God in humanity. Positive psychology emphasizes the importance of positive human well-being, not merely absence of disorder, teaching strategies that

---

<sup>809</sup> Anatolios, *Deification through the Cross*, 268.

<sup>810</sup> *Ibid*, 338.

promote gratitude, virtue, and the positive use of suffering – thus it can participate in the salvific vision of human glory to which all humans are called, and which thus determines the meaning and course of human life. Many other psychotherapeutic practices could also participate in doxological contrition, insofar as they aim to promote human mental health and well-being – it is outside the scope of this thesis to examine every possible psychotherapeutic practice to find its analogues with doxological contrition, but my two chosen examples have demonstrated the capability of psychotherapy to participate in Christian salvation as understood through the cross. Ultimately, I submit that to claim Christ as our end is to see Christ crucified as the standard for our psychological well-being, not because suffering and self-denial are inherently good, but because a more foundational understanding of the cross as the supreme act of Christ’s doxological contrition reveals that true human well-being is found in recognizing the distance between our sinful state and divine glory, and being thus motivated to cry out to God for the repentance needed to effect his true image and glory in ourselves – and both cognitive therapy and positive psychotherapy provide the tools and techniques, on the level of our psychological reality, to participate in that theological reality.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued for the constructive potential of employing traditional Chalcedonian Christological insights to the science-theology discourse surrounding what it means to be human, and I have constructed a method to pursue further explorations of how to relate psychological and theological claims. In this conclusion, I summarize the many discussions and insights from the preceding chapters by emphasizing three of their key aims for the science-theology discourse: first, to reinforce the *possibility* of applying Christological insights to the science-theology discourse; second, to assert the *essentiality* of traditional Chalcedonian Christology to the science-theology discourse on humanity; and third, to demonstrate the *preferability* of a Chalcedonian Christological approach for constructively engaging with psychological claims and methods.

The possibility of bringing Christology to bear on the science-theology discourse was affirmed by the literature reviews in Chapters 1 and 3, which showed how scholars have applied Christological insights to matters in the science-theology discourse, both by appealing to Christ's revelation of true humanity and to his revelation of the God-world relationship. However, a stronger aim of this thesis is to assert not simply Christology's *possible* relevance for the science-theology discourse on humanity, but also Christology's *essentiality* for Christian theology in its interdisciplinary discussions with science. In my Introduction, I appealed to two turns – Sarah Lane Ritchie's "theological turn" and Marc Cortez's "Christocentric turn" – to argue that humanity must be understood Christologically. In this way, Christology becomes a framework for interpreting theological and psychological claims. My critiques of the science-theology literature in Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4, especially where scholarly claims either ignored or contradicted traditional Christological tenets, further bolstered the case for making traditional Chalcedonian Christology primary in understanding humanity from a science-theology perspective.

However, *prima facie* one may still question whether this approach removes theology further from its ability to engage with science by making theology so explicitly grounded in the revelation of Christ. Theological engagement with science is always a bit "messy," so to speak –

could this approach undervalue science's contributions to the discussion for the sake of theological purity? To that aim, I have repeatedly argued in this thesis that my Chalcedonian Christological approach is also *preferable* for theological engagement with psychology, in that it emphasizes the full integrity of psychological methods and claims while opening up new avenues of inquiry that the science-theology discourse has not yet fully considered.

In Chapter 2, I proposed a Chalcedonian Christologically-informed conception of humanity as unique personhood expressed through dynamic, natural energies, and showed how this conception accords with the contemporary scientific conception of humanity as ever-changing, relational, and involved with evolutionary, psychological, and social processes. In Chapter 3, I argued that the Christological principle of “non-competition” in the God-world relationship actually enables scientific claims to have full validity and integrity, rather than undermining them. I furthered this argument in Chapter 4 by identifying the Chalcedonian relationship between theology and psychology as one of participation, which intrinsically ensures psychology's value as a discipline while also grounding it in ultimate significance and meaning. My analysis within the first two parts of the thesis – beginning with Chapter 1's Christological reframing of science-theology conversations and culminating in Chapter 4's Chalcedonian approach to relating disciplines of inquiry – enabled me to craft a Christological method for relating theology and psychology, grounded in the Chalcedonian definition, that can serve as a preferable method for conducting science-theology engagements surrounding humanity, and as such, it represents a useful contribution to the science-theology discourse.

But most crucially to this third aim of demonstrating the *preferability* of using traditional Chalcedonian Christology to approach the psychology-theology relationship, in the final part of the thesis I presented two applications of my Christological method in Chapters 5 and 6 that explored the relationship between salvation in Christ and psychological theories and practices. Chapter 5, in showing how theories of child developmental psychology participate in “filiation” (or becoming a child of God), started from these psychological theories to emphasize the importance of relationships and active knowledge for proper living and salvation. Chapter 6, by showing how the psychotherapeutic practices of cognitive therapy and positive psychology participate in “doxological contrition” (or the salvific repentance that stems from and leads to

divine glory), emphasized the value of these practices for cultivating mental states of well-being that also happen to be salvific. In Chapters 5 and 6, I approached two interesting questions for interdisciplinary theological discourse: to what extent and how are young children worthy of emulation, and what is the significance of the cross for mental well-being. By applying my Christological method to psychological and theological resources, I was able to offer original and detailed answers to both questions. The filial understanding of knowledge and relationships as conditioned by childhood development presented in Chapter 5, and the way doxological contrition focuses psychotherapeutic practices in Chapter 6, both offer the science-theology discourse new paths towards approaching psychology and other human sciences from a theological perspective.

The analysis conducted in these chapters has relevance beyond the science-theology discourse to other areas such as pastoral theology and psychological practice. While plenty of theological books have noted the benefits of learning from childhood developmental psychology for pastoral care purposes, Chapter 5 connects childhood development to the specific salvific end of Christological filiation, and thus can enable pastoral leaders to engage more deeply with childhood development. Rather than seeing children's developmental peculiarities simply as the background that must be navigated such that Christian learning can take place most effectively, pastoral leaders can encourage children's thrusts towards relationships and active knowledge to deepen the children's understandings of themselves as children of God. And even more so, if children's ways of relating and constructing knowledge can be seen as participating in divine filiation, then pastoral leaders can employ the insights from Chapter 5 to help guide the faithful of all ages to be like little children, in the specific ways that exemplify a divine mode of existence. Likewise, childhood developmental psychologists can take inspiration from the theological implications of filiation to guide more studies, conceptual work and theorizing on childhood behavior as relational and active.

The analysis in Chapter 6, which identifies doxological contrition as the desired end of psychotherapy, gives pastoral leaders a way to emphasize the importance of the cross to the faithful's life without focusing on guilt, shame or excessive self-denial. Instead, pastoral leaders can employ techniques from psychotherapy to further the goals of repenting from distortedly

imaging God and attaining humanity's intended glory. In a similar way, Chapter 6 can assist practicing psychotherapists – whether cognitive behavioral therapists, positive psychologists, or others – by demonstrating how doxological contrition informs an understanding of psychological well-being, and thus can focus their psychotherapeutic techniques towards that end. Cognitive behavioral therapy is nebulous about the final end of personal well-being, and positive psychology argues for various traits and characteristics that define well-being – engaging with the theology behind doxological contrition, and showing how Christ crucified actually exemplifies human well-being, could thus be very useful to psychotherapists.

These final two chapters are the culmination of an approach, exemplified in this thesis, in which humanity is understood through traditional Chalcedonian Christology in such a way as to bring together both theological and psychological claims to make new and creative anthropological claims. By taking this approach, I have offered a vision of human constitution as unrepeatably personhood expressed through dynamic energies, which could foster a new paradigm in theological anthropology and the science-theology discourse for understanding humanity both theologically and scientifically. I have defined a method, grounded in the Chalcedonian revelation of the God-world relationship, that sees psychology as participating in theology; such a method has wider applications, including to other scientific disciplines, that could be explored further by the science-theology discourse. Applying this method in my final two chapters has yielded insights that exceed the current discourse and show the potential for constructive theology to engage science in such a way as to be both theoretically robust and practical. My hope is that this thesis can provide the foundation for further constructive explorations within the science-theology discourse of what it means to be human, with similar relevance to wider areas of human life and Christian faith.

# Bibliography

## Works Cited by Chapter

### Works Cited in Introduction

- Cortez, Marc. *Embodied Souls, Ensouled Bodies: An Exercise in Christological Anthropology and Its Significance for the Mind/Body Debate*. London: T&T Clark, 2008.
- Cortez, Marc. "The Madness in our Method: Christology as the Necessary Starting Point for Theological Anthropology" in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, edited by Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro, 15-26. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015.
- Cortez, Marc. *Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective: Ancient and Contemporary Approaches to Theological Anthropology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2016.
- Cortez, Marc. *Resourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017.
- Deane-Drummond, Celia. *Christ and Evolution: Wonder and Wisdom*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009.
- Gregersen, Niels Henrik. "Cur deus caro: Jesus and the Cosmos Story." *Theology and Science* 11, no.4 (2013): 370-393.
- Hart, David Bentley. *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Hick, John (ed.) *The Myth of God Incarnate*. London: SCM Press, 1977.
- Knight, Christopher C. *The God of Nature: Incarnation and Contemporary Science*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.
- Poon, Wilson C. K. "Science as the Foolishness of God: Twenty-Eight Theses and Scholia on 'Science and Religion'" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 253-271. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Ritchie, Sarah Lane. *Divine Action and the Human Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Shults, F. LeRon. *Christology and Science*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008.
- Southgate, Christopher. *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil*. London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008.
- Torrance, Andrew B. and McCall, Thomas H. "Introduction: Christ and the Created Order" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 15-22. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Watts, Fraser (ed.) *Jesus and Psychology*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2007.

### Works Cited in Chapter 1

- Behr, John. *The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006.

- Behr, John. "The Promise of the Image" in *Imago Dei: Human Dignity in Ecumenical Perspective*, edited by Thomas Albert Howard, 15-37. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013.
- Churchland, Patricia Smith. *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind-Brain*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1986.
- Clayton, Philip. "Neuroscience, the Person, and God: An Emergentist Account" *Zygon* 35,3 (2000): 613-652.
- Collin, James Henry. "Human Uniqueness and the Normative Conception of the Rational" in *Issues in Science and Theology: Are We Special? Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology*, edited by Michael Fuller, Dirk Evers, Anne Runehov, and Knut-Willy Sæther, 235-246. Cham: Springer, 2017.
- Crisp, Oliver. "A Christological Model of the Imago Dei" in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, edited by Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro, 217-229. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015.
- Daley, S.J., Brian E. "The Word and His Flesh: Weakness and the Identity of Jesus in Greek Patristic Christology" in *Suffering and Evil in Early Christian Thought*, edited by Nonna Verna Harrison and David G. Hunter, 139-153. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=4901261>.
- Fergusson, David. "Humans Created According to the *Imago Dei*: An Alternative Proposal," *Zygon* 48,2 (2013): 439-453.
- Gregersen, Niels Henrik. "Varieties of Personhood: Mapping the Issues" in *The Human Person in Science and Theology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, Willem B. Drees, and Ulf Görman, 1-17. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000.
- Harris, Mark. "When Jesus Lost his Soul: Fourth-Century Christology and Modern Neuroscience." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 70,1 (2017): 74-92.
- Hart, David Bentley. *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Hasker, William. "The Emergence of Persons" in *The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity*, edited by J.B. Stump and Alan G. Padgett, 480-490. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- Hefner, Philip. "Imago Dei: The Possibility and Necessity of the Human Person" in *The Human Person in Science and Theology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, Willem B. Drees, and Ulf Görman, 73-94. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000.
- Herzfeld, Noreen. "In Whose Image? Artificial Intelligence and the *Imago Dei*" in *The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity*, edited by J.B. Stump and Alan G. Padgett, 500-509. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- Leidenhag, Joanna. "The Revival of Panpsychism and its Relevance for the Science-Religion Dialogue" *Theology and Science* 17,1 (2019): 90-106.
- Moreland, J.P. "Christianity, Neuroscience, and Dualism" in *The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity*, edited by J.B. Stump and Alan G. Padgett, 465-479. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- Moritz, Joshua M. "Evolution, the End of Human Uniqueness, and the Election of the *Imago Dei*," *Theology and Science* 9,3 (2011): 307-339.
- Murphy, Nancey. "Human Nature: Historical, Scientific, and Religious Issues" in *Whatever Happened to the Soul?: Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature*, edited by

- Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Malony, 1-29. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.
- Ritchie, Sarah Lane. *Divine Action and the Human Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Russell, Norman. *Fellow Workers with God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis*. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009.
- Watts, Fraser. "The Multifaceted Nature of Human Personhood: Psychological and Theological Perspectives" in *The Human Person in Science and Theology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, Willem B. Drees, and Ulf Görman, 41-63. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000.
- Westermann, Claus. *Creation*. London: SPCK, 1974. Translated by John J. Scullion.
- White, Jr., Lynn. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155,3767 (1967): 1203-1207.
- Zizioulas, John D. *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985.
- Zizioulas, John D. *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today*. Alhambra, California: Sebastian Press, 2010.

## **Works Cited in Chapter 2**

- Anatolios, Khaled. "The Christ of the Creeds" in *The Blackwell Companion to Jesus*, edited by Delbert Burkett, 176-192. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- Bathrellos, Demetrios. *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Behr, John. *The Way to Nicaea: The Formation of Christian Theology: Vol. I*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001.
- Brown, Warren S. and Strawn, Brad D. "Self-Organizing Personhood: Complex Emergent Developmental Linguistic Relational Neurophysiologicalism" in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, edited by Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro, 91-101. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015.
- Bruce, Lindsay and Ritchie, Sarah Lane. "The Physicalized Mind and the Gut-Brain Axis: Taking Mental Health out of our Heads" *Zygon* 53,2 (2018): 356-374.
- Gregersen, Niels Henrik. "Varieties of Personhood: Mapping the Issues" in *The Human Person in Science and Theology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, Willem B. Drees, and Ulf Görman, 1-17. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000.
- Harris, Mark. "When Jesus Lost his Soul: Fourth-Century Christology and Modern Neuroscience." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 70,1 (2017): 74-92.
- Hart, David Bentley. *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Lossky, Vladimir. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., Ltd, 1957.
- Lossky, Vladimir. *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978.
- Meyendorff, John. *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*. Washington, DC: Corpus Publications, 1969.
- Meyendorff, John. *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1983.

- Meyendorff, John. "New Life in Christ: Salvation in Orthodox Theology" *Theological Studies* 50,3 (1989): 481-499.
- Russell, Norman. *Fellow Workers with God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis*. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009.
- Plantinga, Alvin. "Materialism and Christian Belief" in *Persons: Human and Divine*, edited by Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman, 99-141. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Swinburne, Richard. "From Mental/Physical Identity to Substance Dualism" in *Persons: Human and Divine*, edited by Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman, 142-165. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Swinburne, Richard. "Substance Dualism." *Faith and Philosophy* 26,5 (2009): 501-513.
- Swinburne, Richard. "The coherence of the Chalcedonian Definition of the incarnation" in *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, edited by Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill, 153-167. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Torrance, Alexis. *Human Perfection in Byzantine Theology: Attaining the Fullness of Christ*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Turner, Léon P. "First Person Plural: Self-Unity and Self-Multiplicity in Theology's Dialogue with Psychology" *Zygon* 42,1 (2007): 7-24.
- Van Huyssteen, J. Wentzel. "What Makes Us Human? The Interdisciplinary Challenge to Theological Anthropology and Christology" *Toronto Journal of Theology* 26,2 (2010): 143-160.
- Verna Harrison, Nonna. "Human Uniqueness and Human Identity" in *Abba: The Tradition of Orthodox in the West: Festschrift for Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia*, edited by John Behr, Andrew Louth, and Dimitri Conomos, 207-220. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003.
- Williams, Rowan. *Christ the Heart of Creation*. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018.
- Williams, Rowan. *Looking East in Winter*. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2021.
- Wirzba, Norman. "Creation through Christ" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 35-53. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Yannaras, Christos. *Elements of Faith*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991.
- Yannaras, Christos. *Person and Eros*. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007.

### **Works Cited in Chapter 3**

- Barbour, Ian G. "God's Power: A Process View" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 1-20. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Bauckham, Richard. "The Incarnation and the Cosmic Christ" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 25-57. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Behr, John. "Saint Athanasius on 'Incarnation'" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 79-98. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Coakley, Sarah. "Kenosis: Theological Meanings and Gender Connotations" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 192-210. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Curry, Brian. "Christ, Creation, and the Powers: Elements in a Christian Doctrine of Creation" in

- Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 77-95. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Deane-Drummond, Celia. "The Wisdom of Fools? A Theo-Dramatic Interpretation of Deep Incarnation" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 177-201. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Edwards, Denis. "Incarnation and the Natural World: Explorations in the Tradition of Athanasius" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 157-176. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Ellis, George F.R. "Kenosis as a Unifying Theme for Life and Cosmology" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 107-126. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Fiddes, Paul S. "Creation Out of Love" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 167-191. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Gregersen, Niels Henrik. "Introduction" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 1-21. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Gregersen, Niels Henrik. "The Extended Body of Christ: Three Dimensions of Deep Incarnation" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 225-251. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Gregersen, Niels Henrik. "Deep Incarnation: Opportunities and Challenges" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 361-379. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Harris, Mark. "When Jesus Lost his Soul: Fourth-Century Christology and Modern Neuroscience." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 70,1 (2017): 74-92.
- Hart, David Bentley. *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003.
- Hart, David Bentley. *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Jeeves, Malcolm. "The Nature of Persons and the Emergence of Kenotic Behavior" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 66-89. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Knight, Christopher C. "An Eastern Orthodox Critique of the Science-Theology Dialogue" *Zygon* 51,3 (2016): 573-591.
- Knight, Christopher C. *Science and the Christian Faith: A Guide for the Perplexed*. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2020.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. "God's Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 137-151. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Nesteruk, Alexei V. "The Universe as Hypostatic Inherence in the Logos of God: Panentheism in the Eastern Orthodox Perspective" in *In Whom we Live and Move and Have our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's presence in a Scientific World*, edited by Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, 169-183. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004.
- Peacocke, Arthur. "The Cost of New Life" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 21-42. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Polkinghorne, John. "Kenotic Creation and Divine Action" in *The Work of Love: Creation as*

- Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 90-106. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Polkinghorne, John. "Afterword: Reservations" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 355-359. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Poon, Wilson C. K. "Science as the Foolishness of God: Twenty-Eight Theses and Scholia on 'Science and Religion'" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 253-271. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Rae, Murray. "Jesus Christ, the Order of Creation" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 23-34. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Rolston III, Holmes. "Kenosis and Nature" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 43-65. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Rolston III, Holmes. "Divine Presence – Causal, Cybernetic, Caring, Cruciform: From Information to Incarnation" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 255-287. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Russell, Robert John. "Jesus: The Way of all Flesh and the Proleptic Feather of Time" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 331-352. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Smith, James K. A. "Our Chalcedonian Moment: Christological Imagination for Scientific Challenges" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 179-193. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Southgate, Christopher. "Depth, Sign and Destiny: Thoughts on Incarnation" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 203-223. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Stump, J.B. "Explaining the Created Order: Scientific and Personal Images" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 211-226. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Tollefsen, Torstein Theodor. "Saint Maximus the Confessor on Creation and Incarnation" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 99-115. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Torrance, Andrew B. and McCall, Thomas H. "Introduction: Christ and the Created Order" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 15-22. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Ward, Keith. "Cosmos and Kenosis" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 152-166. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Williams, Rowan. *Christ the Heart of Creation*. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018.
- Wirzba, Norman. "Creation through Christ" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 35-53. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Wright, N.T. "Christ and the Cosmos: Kingdom and Creation in Gospel Perspective" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 97-109. Grand Rapids, Michigan:

Zondervan, 2018.

#### **Works Cited in Chapter 4**

- Alfsvåg, Knut. "Unknowability and Incarnation: Creation and Christology as Philosophy of Science in the Work of Nicholas Cusanus" *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 21,2 (2019): 141-156.
- Davison, Andrew. *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Engelhardt, H. Tristram. "Foreword" in *Ancient Christian Wisdom and Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy: A Meeting of Minds* by Alexis Trader, ix-xii. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 2011.
- Hunsinger, Deborah Van Deusen. *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Meyendorff, John. *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982.
- Milbank, John, Ward, Graham, and Pickstock, Catherine. "Introduction: Suspending the material: the turn of radical orthodoxy" in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, edited by John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, 1-20. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Nesteruk, Alexei V. *Light from the East: Theology, Science, and the Eastern Orthodox Tradition*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.
- Nesteruk, Alexei V. "The Universe as Hypostatic Inherence in the Logos of God: Panentheism in the Eastern Orthodox Perspective" in *In Whom we Live and Move and Have our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's presence in a Scientific World*, edited by Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, 169-183. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004.
- Ritchie, Sarah Lane. *Divine Action and the Human Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Trader, Alexis. *Ancient Christian Wisdom and Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy: A Meeting of Minds*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 2011.
- Turner, Léon. "Dialogue within Dialogues: The Idea of the Person in Psychology and Theology," in *Mutual Enrichment between Psychology and Theology*, edited by Russell Re Manning, 17-32. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2021.
- Van Huyssteen, J. Wentzel. *Alone in the World? Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006.
- Watts, Fraser. *Science Meets Faith*. SPCK: London, 1998.
- Watts, Fraser. *Theology and Psychology*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002.
- Watts, Fraser. "Relating the Psychology and Theology of Forgiveness," in *Forgiveness in Context: Theology and Psychology in Creative Dialogue*, edited by Fraser Watts and Liz Gulliford, 1-10. London: T&T Clark International, 2004.
- Watts, Fraser. "Psychology and theology." In *The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion*, edited by Peter Harrison, 190-206. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

## Works Cited in Chapter 5

- Bee, Helen L. and Boyd, Denise Roberts. *The Developing Child*. 11<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boston: Pearson, 2007.
- Berryman, Jerome W. *Children and the Theologians: Clearing the Way for Grace*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2009.
- Brown, Carol. *Developmental Psychology*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2008.
- Bunge, Marcia J. "Introduction." In *The Child in Christian Thought*, edited by Marcia J. Bunge, 1-28. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001.
- Burman, Erica. *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology*. Hove, East Sussex: Routledge, 2008.
- Butterworth, George and Harris, Margaret. *Principles of Developmental Psychology*. Hove, UK: Psychology Press Ltd, 2003.
- Cully, Iris V. *Christian Child Development*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1980.
- Granqvist, Pehr. "Attachment and Religiosity in Adolescence: Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Evaluations" *PSPB* 28,2 (2002): 260-270.
- Granqvist, Pehr. *Attachment in Religion and Spirituality: A Wider View*. New York: The Guilford Press, 2020.
- Granqvist, Pehr and Kirkpatrick, Lee A. "Attachment and Religious Representation and Behavior" in *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications* Third Edition edited by Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver, 917-940. New York: The Guilford Press, 2016.
- Granqvist, Pehr, Mikulincer, Mario, and Shaver, Phillip R. "Religion as Attachment: Normative Processes and Individual Differences" *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14,1 (2010): 49-59.
- Gundry-Volf, Judith M. "'To such as these belongs the reign of God': Jesus and Children." *Theology Today* 56,4 (2000): 469-480.
- Guroian, Vigen. *The Orthodox Reality: Culture, Theology, and Ethics in the Modern World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018.
- Harris, Margaret. *Exploring Developmental Psychology: Understanding Theory and Methods*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2008.
- Harris, Margaret and Westermann, Gert. *A Student's Guide to Developmental Psychology*. New York: Psychology Press, 2015.
- Hart, David Bentley. *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003.
- Hyde, Brendan. "Montessori and Jerome W. Berryman: work, play, religious education and the art of using the Christian language system" *British Journal of Religious Education* 33,3 (2011): 341-353.
- McGuckin, John Anthony. *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture*. Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2011.
- Meyendorff, John. "New Life in Christ: Salvation in Orthodox Theology" *Theological Studies* 50,3 (1989): 481-499.
- Mitchell, Peter and Ziegler, Fenja. *Fundamentals of Developmental Psychology*. Second Edition. New York: Psychology Press, 2013.
- Mountain, Vivienne. "Four links between Child Theology and children's spirituality." *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 16,3 (2011): 261-269.
- Reznick, J. Steven. "Research Design and Methods: Toward a Cumulative Developmental

- Science” in *The Oxford Handbook of Developmental Psychology, Vol. 1: Body and Mind*, edited by Philip David Zelazo, 35-62. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Ritchie, Stuart. *Science Fictions: How Fraud, Bias, Negligence, and Hype Undermine the Search for Truth*. New York, Metropolitan Books, 2020.
- Schaffer, H. Rudolph. *Key Concepts in Developmental Psychology*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2006.
- Siegler, Robert S., and Alibali, Martha W. *Children’s Thinking*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005.
- Thatcher, Adrian. “Theology and Children: Towards a Theology of Childhood.” *Transformation* 23,4 (2006):194-199.
- Trader, Alexis. *Ancient Christian Wisdom and Aaron Beck’s Cognitive Therapy: A Meeting of Minds*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 2011.
- Watts, Fraser. *Psychology, Spirituality, and Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Williams, Rowan. *On Christian Theology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.
- Williams, Rowan. *Christ the Heart of Creation*. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018.
- Williams, Rowan. *Looking East in Winter*. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2021.
- Yannaras, Christos. *Elements of Faith*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991.
- Zelazo, Philip David. “Developmental Psychology: A New Synthesis” in *The Oxford Handbook of Developmental Psychology, Vol. 1: Body and Mind*, edited by Philip David Zelazo, 3-11. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

### **Works Cited in Chapter 6**

- Anatolios, Khaled. *Deification Through the Cross: An Eastern Christian Theology of Salvation*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2020. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=6407721>.
- Beck, Aaron T. and Alford, Brad A. *Depression: Causes and Treatment*. Second Edition. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.
- Beck, Aaron T. and Dozois, David J.A. “Cognitive Therapy: Current Status and Future Directions” *The Annual Review of Medicine* 62 (2010): 397-409.
- Beck, Judith S. *Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Basics and Beyond*. Second Edition. London: The Guilford Press, 2011.
- Behr, John. *The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2006.
- Behr, John. “The Promise of the Image” in *Imago Dei: Human Dignity in Ecumenical Perspective*, edited by Thomas Albert Howard, 15-37. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013.
- Browning, Don S. *Atonement and Psychotherapy*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966.
- Browning, Don S. *Reviving Christian Humanism*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.
- Charry, Ellen T. and Kosits, Russell D. “Christian Theology and Positive Psychology: An Exchange of Gifts” *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 12,5 (2017): 468-479.
- Clayton, Philip. “The theology of spiritual healing” in *Spiritual Healing: Scientific and Religious Perspectives*, edited by Fraser Watts, 44-63. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Coakley, Sarah. “Kenosis: Theological Meanings and Gender Connotations” in *The Work of*

- Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 192-210. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Downey, Christina A. and Henderson, Reggie E. "Speculation, Conceptualization, or Evidence?: A History of Positive Psychology" in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, edited by C.R. Snyder, Shane J. Lopez, Lisa M. Edwards, and Susana C. Marques, 9-17. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Gallagher, Matthew W. and Lopez, Shane J. "Strengthening Positive Psychology" in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, edited by C.R. Snyder, Shane J. Lopez, Lisa M. Edwards, and Susana C. Marques, 3-7. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Guroian, Vigen. "Salvation: Divine Therapy" *Theology Today* 61,3 (2004): 309-21.
- Haidt, Jonathan. *The Happiness Hypothesis: Putting Ancient Wisdom to the Test of Modern Science*. London: W. Heinemann, 2006.
- Haight, John F. "God and Evolution" in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, edited by Philip Clayton, 697-712. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Hunsinger, Deborah Van Deusen. *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Leo the Great. *Letters St. Leo the Great*. Translated by Edmund Hunt. New York: Catholic University of America Press, 2004.
- Meyendorff, John. "New Life in Christ: Salvation in Orthodox Theology" *Theological Studies* 50,3 (1989): 481-499.
- Owens, Rhea L. "The Future of Positive Psychology: A Bright Outlook" in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, edited by C.R. Snyder, Shane J. Lopez, Lisa M. Edwards, and Susana C. Marques, 968-974. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Pattison, Stephen. *Shame: Theory, Therapy, Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Peters, Ted. "Extinction, Natural Evil, and the Cosmic Cross" *Zygon* 53,3 (2018): 691-710.
- Peterson, Christopher and Seligman, Martin E.P. *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Podmore, Simon D. "'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?': Between Consolation and Desolation" in *Spirituality, Theology and Mental Health: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Christopher C.H. Cook, 193-210. London: SCM Press, 2013.
- Seligman, Martin and Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. "Positive Psychology: An Introduction" *American Psychologist* 55,1 (2000): 5-14.
- Seligman, Martin E.P., Rashid, Tayyab, and Parks, Acacia C. "Positive Psychotherapy" *American Psychologist* 61,8 (2006): 774-788.
- Seligman, Martin E.P. "Positive Health" *Applied Psychology* 57,1 (2008): 3-18.
- Seligman, Martin E.P. "Positive Psychology: A Personal History" *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* 15 (2019): 1-23
- Seligman, Martin E.P. *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being*. New York: Free Press, 2011.
- Southgate, Christopher. *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil*. London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008.
- Trader, Alexis. *Ancient Christian Wisdom and Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy: A Meeting of Minds*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 2011.
- Watts, Fraser. "Shame, Sin and Guilt" in *Forgiveness and Truth: Explorations in Contemporary Theology*, edited by Alistair I. McFadyen, Marcel Sarot and Anthony Thiselton, 53-69.

- Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001.
- Watts, Fraser, Nye, Rebecca, and Savage, Sara B. *Psychology for Christian Ministry*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Watts, Fraser. "Theology and Science of Mental Health and Well-Being" *Zygon* 53,2 (2018): 336-355.
- Wood, Alex M., Davidson, Adam T., Linley, P. Alex, Maltby, John, Harrington, Susan and Joseph, Stephen. "Applications of Positive Psychology" in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, edited by C.R. Snyder, Shane J. Lopez, Lisa M. Edwards, and Susana C. Marques, 43-58. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Yannaras, Christos. *Person and Eros*. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007.

### Full Bibliography

- Alfsvåg, Knut. "Unknowability and Incarnation: Creation and Christology as Philosophy of Science in the Work of Nicholas Cusanus" *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 21,2 (2019): 141-156.
- Anatolios, Khaled. "The Christ of the Creeds" in *The Blackwell Companion to Jesus*, edited by Delbert Burkett, 176-192. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- Anatolios, Khaled. *Deification Through the Cross: An Eastern Christian Theology of Salvation*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2020. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=6407721>.
- Barbour, Ian G. "God's Power: A Process View" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 1-20. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Bathrellos, Demetrios. *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Bauckham, Richard. "The Incarnation and the Cosmic Christ" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 25-57. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Beck, Aaron T. and Alford, Brad A. *Depression: Causes and Treatment*. Second Edition. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.
- Beck, Aaron T. and Dozois, David J.A. "Cognitive Therapy: Current Status and Future Directions" *The Annual Review of Medicine* 62 (2010): 397-409.
- Beck, Judith S. *Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Basics and Beyond*. Second Edition. London: The Guilford Press, 2011.
- Bee, Helen L. and Boyd, Denise Roberts. *The Developing Child*. 11<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boston: Pearson, 2007.
- Behr, John. *The Way to Nicaea: The Formation of Christian Theology: Vol. I*. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001.
- Behr, John. *The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006.
- Behr, John. "The Promise of the Image" in *Imago Dei: Human Dignity in Ecumenical Perspective*, edited by Thomas Albert Howard, 15-37. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013.
- Behr, John. "Saint Athanasius on 'Incarnation'" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of*

- Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 79-98. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Berryman, Jerome W. *Children and the Theologians: Clearing the Way for Grace*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2009.
- Brown, Carol. *Developmental Psychology*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2008.
- Brown, Warren S. and Strawn, Brad D. "Self-Organizing Personhood: Complex Emergent Developmental Linguistic Relational Neurophysiologicalism" in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, edited by Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro, 91-101. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015.
- Browning, Don S. *Atonement and Psychotherapy*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966.
- Browning, Don S. *Reviving Christian Humanism*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.
- Bruce, Lindsay and Ritchie, Sarah Lane. "The Physicalized Mind and the Gut-Brain Axis: Taking Mental Health out of our Heads" *Zygon* 53,2 (2018): 356-374.
- Bunge, Marcia J. "Introduction." In *The Child in Christian Thought*, edited by Marcia J. Bunge, 1-28. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001.
- Burman, Erica. *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology*. Hove, East Sussex: Routledge, 2008.
- Butterworth, George and Harris, Margaret. *Principles of Developmental Psychology*. Hove, UK: Psychology Press Ltd, 2003.
- Churchland, Patricia Smith. *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind-Brain*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1986.
- Charry, Ellen T. and Kosits, Russell D. "Christian Theology and Positive Psychology: An Exchange of Gifts" *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 12,5 (2017): 468-479.
- Clayton, Philip. "Neuroscience, the Person, and God: An Emergentist Account" *Zygon* 35,3 (2000): 613-652.
- Clayton, Philip. "The theology of spiritual healing" in *Spiritual Healing: Scientific and Religious Perspectives*, edited by Fraser Watts, 44-63. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Coakley, Sarah. "Kenosis: Theological Meanings and Gender Connotations" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 192-210. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Collin, James Henry. "Human Uniqueness and the Normative Conception of the Rational" in *Issues in Science and Theology: Are We Special? Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology*, edited by Michael Fuller, Dirk Evers, Anne Runehov, and Knut-Willy Sæther, 235-246. Cham: Springer, 2017.
- Cortez, Marc. *Embodied Souls, Ensouled Bodies: An Exercise in Christological Anthropology and Its Significance for the Mind/Body Debate*. London: T&T Clark, 2008.
- Cortez, Marc. "The Madness in our Method: Christology as the Necessary Starting Point for Theological Anthropology" in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, edited by Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro, 15-26. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015.
- Cortez, Marc. *Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective: Ancient and Contemporary Approaches to Theological Anthropology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2016.
- Cortez, Marc. *Resourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017.
- Crisp, Oliver. "A Christological Model of the Imago Dei" in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, edited by Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro, 217-229.

- Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015.
- Cully, Iris V. *Christian Child Development*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1980.
- Curry, Brian. "Christ, Creation, and the Powers: Elements in a Christian Doctrine of Creation" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 77-95. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Daley, S.J., Brian E. "The Word and His Flesh: Weakness and the Identity of Jesus in Greek Patristic Christology" in *Suffering and Evil in Early Christian Thought*, edited by Nonna Verna Harrison and David G. Hunter, 139-153. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ed/detail.action?docID=4901261>
- Davison, Andrew. *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Deane-Drummond, Celia. *Christ and Evolution: Wonder and Wisdom*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009.
- Deane-Drummond, Celia. "The Wisdom of Fools? A Theo-Dramatic Interpretation of Deep Incarnation" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 177-201. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Downey, Christina A. and Henderson, Reggie E. "Speculation, Conceptualization, or Evidence?: A History of Positive Psychology" in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, edited by C.R. Snyder, Shane J. Lopez, Lisa M. Edwards, and Susana C. Marques, 9-17. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Edwards, Denis. "Incarnation and the Natural World: Explorations in the Tradition of Athanasius" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 157-176. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Ellis, George F.R. "Kenosis as a Unifying Theme for Life and Cosmology" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 107-126. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Engelhardt, H. Tristram. "Foreword" in *Ancient Christian Wisdom and Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy: A Meeting of Minds* by Alexis Trader, ix-xii. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 2011.
- Fergusson, David. "Humans Created According to the *Imago Dei*: An Alternative Proposal," *Zygon* 48,2 (2013): 439-453.
- Fiddes, Paul S. "Creation Out of Love" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 167-191. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Gallagher, Matthew W. and Lopez, Shane J. "Strengthening Positive Psychology" in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, edited by C.R. Snyder, Shane J. Lopez, Lisa M. Edwards, and Susana C. Marques, 3-7. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Granqvist, Pehr. "Attachment and Religiosity in Adolescence: Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Evaluations" *PSPB* 28,2 (2002): 260-270.
- Granqvist, Pehr. *Attachment in Religion and Spirituality: A Wider View*. New York: The Guilford Press, 2020.
- Granqvist, Pehr and Kirkpatrick, Lee A. "Attachment and Religious Representation and Behavior" in *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications* Third Edition edited by Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver, 917-940. New York: The Guilford Press, 2016.

- Granqvist, Pehr, Mikulincer, Mario, and Shaver, Phillip R. "Religion as Attachment: Normative Processes and Individual Differences" *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14,1 (2010): 49-59.
- Gregersen, Niels Henrik. "Varieties of Personhood: Mapping the Issues" in *The Human Person in Science and Theology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, Willem B. Drees, and Ulf Görman, 1-17. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000.
- Gregersen, Niels Henrik. "Cur deus caro: Jesus and the Cosmos Story." *Theology and Science* 11, no.4 (2013): 370-393.
- Gregersen, Niels Henrik. "Introduction" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 1-21. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Gregersen, Niels Henrik. "The Extended Body of Christ: Three Dimensions of Deep Incarnation" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 225-251. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Gregersen, Niels Henrik. "Deep Incarnation: Opportunities and Challenges" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 361-379. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Gundry-Volf, Judith M. "'To such as these belongs the reign of God': Jesus and Children." *Theology Today* 56,4 (2000): 469-480.
- Guroian, Vigen. "Salvation: Divine Therapy" *Theology Today* 61,3 (2004): 309-21.
- Guroian, Vigen. *The Orthodox Reality: Culture, Theology, and Ethics in the Modern World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018.
- Haidt, Jonathan. *The Happiness Hypothesis: Putting Ancient Wisdom to the Test of Modern Science*. London: W. Heinemann, 2006.
- Harris, Margaret. *Exploring Developmental Psychology: Understanding Theory and Methods*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2008.
- Harris, Margaret and Westermann, Gert. *A Student's Guide to Developmental Psychology*. New York: Psychology Press, 2015.
- Harris, Mark. "When Jesus Lost his Soul: Fourth-Century Christology and Modern Neuroscience." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 70,1 (2017): 74-92.
- Hart, David Bentley. *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003.
- Hart, David Bentley. *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and its Fashionable Enemies*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Hasker, William. "The Emergence of Persons" in *The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity*, edited by J.B. Stump and Alan G. Padgett, 480-490. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- Haught, John F. "God and Evolution" in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, edited by Philip Clayton, 697-712. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Hefner, Philip. "Imago Dei: The Possibility and Necessity of the Human Person" in *The Human Person in Science and Theology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, Willem B. Drees, and Ulf Görman, 73-94. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000.
- Herzfeld, Noreen. "In Whose Image? Artificial Intelligence and the *Imago Dei*" in *The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity*, edited by J.B. Stump and Alan G. Padgett, 500-509. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- Hick, John (ed.) *The Myth of God Incarnate*. London: SCM Press, 1977.
- Hunsinger, Deborah Van Deusen. *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary*

- Approach*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Hyde, Brendan. "Montessori and Jerome W. Berryman: work, play, religious education and the art of using the Christian language system" *British Journal of Religious Education* 33,3 (2011): 341-353.
- Jeeves, Malcolm. "The Nature of Persons and the Emergence of Kenotic Behavior" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 66-89. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Knight, Christopher C. *The God of Nature: Incarnation and Contemporary Science*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.
- Knight, Christopher C. "An Eastern Orthodox Critique of the Science-Theology Dialogue" *Zygon* 51,3 (2016): 573-591.
- Knight, Christopher C. *Science and the Christian Faith: A Guide for the Perplexed*. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2020.
- Leidenhag, Joanna. "The Revival of Panpsychism and its Relevance for the Science-Religion Dialogue" *Theology and Science* 17,1 (2019): 90-106.
- Leo the Great. *Letters St. Leo the Great*. Translated by Edmund Hunt. New York: Catholic University of America Press, 2004.
- Lossky, Vladimir. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., Ltd, 1957.
- Lossky, Vladimir. *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978.
- McGuckin, John Anthony. *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture*. Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2011.
- Meyendorff, John. *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*. Washington, DC: Corpus Publications, 1969.
- Meyendorff, John. *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982.
- Meyendorff, John. *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1983.
- Meyendorff, John. "New Life in Christ: Salvation in Orthodox Theology" *Theological Studies* 50,3 (1989): 481-499.
- Milbank, John, Ward, Graham, and Pickstock, Catherine. "Introduction: Suspending the material: the turn of radical orthodoxy" in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, edited by John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, 1-20. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Mitchell, Peter and Ziegler, Fenja. *Fundamentals of Developmental Psychology*. Second Edition. New York: Psychology Press, 2013.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. "God's Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 137-151. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Moreland, J.P. "Christianity, Neuroscience, and Dualism" in *The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity*, edited by J.B. Stump and Alan G. Padgett, 465-479. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- Moritz, Joshua M. "Evolution, the End of Human Uniqueness, and the Election of the *Imago Dei*," *Theology and Science* 9,3 (2011): 307-339.
- Mountain, Vivienne. "Four links between Child Theology and children's spirituality."

- International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 16,3 (2011): 261-269.
- Murphy, Nancey. "Human Nature: Historical, Scientific, and Religious Issues" in *Whatever Happened to the Soul?: Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature*, edited by Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Malony, 1-29. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.
- Nesteruk, Alexei V. *Light from the East: Theology, Science, and the Eastern Orthodox Tradition*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.
- Nesteruk, Alexei V. "The Universe as Hypostatic Inherence in the Logos of God: Panentheism in the Eastern Orthodox Perspective" in *In Whom we Live and Move and Have our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's presence in a Scientific World*, edited by Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, 169-183. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004.
- Owens, Rhea L. "The Future of Positive Psychology: A Bright Outlook" in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, edited by C.R. Snyder, Shane J. Lopez, Lisa M. Edwards, and Susana C. Marques, 968-974. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Pattison, Stephen. *Shame: Theory, Therapy, Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Peacocke, Arthur. "The Cost of New Life" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 21-42. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Peters, Ted. "Extinction, Natural Evil, and the Cosmic Cross" *Zygon* 53,3 (2018): 691-710.
- Peterson, Christopher and Seligman, Martin E.P. *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Plantinga, Alvin. "Materialism and Christian Belief" in *Persons: Human and Divine*, edited by Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman, 99-141. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Podmore, Simon D. "'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" Between Consolation and Desolation" in *Spirituality, Theology and Mental Health: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Christopher C.H. Cook, 193-210. London: SCM Press, 2013.
- Polkinghorne, John. "Kenotic Creation and Divine Action" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 90-106. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Polkinghorne, John. "Afterword: Reservations" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 355-359. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Poon, Wilson C. K. "Science as the Foolishness of God: Twenty-Eight Theses and Scholia on 'Science and Religion'" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 253-271. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Rae, Murray. "Jesus Christ, the Order of Creation" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 23-34. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Reznick, J. Steven. "Research Design and Methods: Toward a Cumulative Developmental Science" in *The Oxford Handbook of Developmental Psychology, Vol. 1: Body and Mind*, edited by Philip David Zelazo, 35-62. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Ritchie, Sarah Lane. *Divine Action and the Human Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Ritchie, Stuart. *Science Fictions: How Fraud, Bias, Negligence, and Hype Undermine the Search*

- for Truth*. New York, Metropolitan Books, 2020.
- Rolston III, Holmes. "Kenosis and Nature" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 43-65. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Rolston III, Holmes. "Divine Presence – Causal, Cybernetic, Caring, Cruciform: From Information to Incarnation" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 255-287. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Russell, Norman. *Fellow Workers with God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis*. Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009.
- Russell, Robert John. "Jesus: The Way of all Flesh and the Proleptic Feather of Time" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 331-352. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Schaffer, H. Rudolph. *Key Concepts in Developmental Psychology*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2006.
- Seligman, Martin and Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. "Positive Psychology: An Introduction" *American Psychologist* 55,1 (2000): 5-14.
- Seligman, Martin E.P., Rashid, Tayyab, and Parks, Acacia C. "Positive Psychotherapy" *American Psychologist* 61,8 (2006): 774-788.
- Seligman, Martin E.P. "Positive Health" *Applied Psychology* 57,1 (2008): 3-18.
- Seligman, Martin E.P. "Positive Psychology: A Personal History" *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* 15 (2019): 1-23
- Seligman, Martin E.P. *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being*. New York: Free Press, 2011.
- Siegler, Robert S., and Alibali, Martha W. *Children's Thinking*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005.
- Shults, F. LeRon. *Christology and Science*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008.
- Smith, James K. A. "Our Chalcedonian Moment: Christological Imagination for Scientific Challenges" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 179-193. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Southgate, Christopher. *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil*. London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008.
- Southgate, Christopher. "Depth, Sign and Destiny: Thoughts on Incarnation" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 203-223. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Stump, J.B. "Explaining the Created Order: Scientific and Personal Images" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 211-226. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Swinburne, Richard. "From Mental/Physical Identity to Substance Dualism" in *Persons: Human and Divine*, edited by Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman, 142-165. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Swinburne, Richard. "Substance Dualism." *Faith and Philosophy* 26,5 (2009): 501-513.
- Swinburne, Richard. "The coherence of the Chalcedonian Definition of the incarnation" in *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, edited by Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill, 153-167. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Thatcher, Adrian. "Theology and Children: Towards a Theology of Childhood." *Transformation*

- 23,4 (2006):194-199.
- Tollefsen, Torstein Theodor. "Saint Maximus the Confessor on Creation and Incarnation" in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depth of Christology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, 99-115. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Torrance, Alexis. *Human Perfection in Byzantine Theology: Attaining the Fullness of Christ*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Torrance, Andrew B. and McCall, Thomas H. "Introduction: Christ and the Created Order" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 15-22. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Trader, Alexis. *Ancient Christian Wisdom and Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy: A Meeting of Minds*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 2011.
- Turner, Léon P. "First Person Plural: Self-Unity and Self-Multiplicity in Theology's Dialogue with Psychology" *Zygon* 42,1 (2007): 7-24.
- Turner, Léon. "Dialogue within Dialogues: The Idea of the Person in Psychology and Theology," in *Mutual Enrichment between Psychology and Theology*, edited by Russell Re Manning, 17-32. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2021.
- Van Huyssteen, J. Wentzel. *Alone in the World? Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006.
- Van Huyssteen, J. Wentzel. "What Makes Us Human? The Interdisciplinary Challenge to Theological Anthropology and Christology" *Toronto Journal of Theology* 26,2 (2010): 143-160.
- Verna Harrison, Nonna. "Human Uniqueness and Human Identity" in *Abba: The Tradition of Orthodox in the West: Festschrift for Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia*, edited by John Behr, Andrew Louth, and Dimitri Conomos, 207-220. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003.
- Ward, Keith. "Cosmos and Kenosis" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, edited by John Polkinghorne, 152-166. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Watts, Fraser. *Science Meets Faith*. SPCK: London, 1998.
- Watts, Fraser. "The Multifaceted Nature of Human Personhood: Psychological and Theological Perspectives" in *The Human Person in Science and Theology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, Willem B. Drees, and Ulf Görman, 41-63. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000.
- Watts, Fraser. "Shame, Sin and Guilt" in *Forgiveness and Truth: Explorations in Contemporary Theology*, edited by Alistair I. McFadyen, Marcel Sarot and Anthony Thiselton, 53-69. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001.
- Watts, Fraser. *Theology and Psychology*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002.
- Watts, Fraser, Nye, Rebecca, and Savage, Sara B. *Psychology for Christian Ministry*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Watts, Fraser. "Relating the Psychology and Theology of Forgiveness," in *Forgiveness in Context: Theology and Psychology in Creative Dialogue*, edited by Fraser Watts and Liz Gulliford, 1-10. London: T&T Clark International, 2004.
- Watts, Fraser (ed.) *Jesus and Psychology*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2007.
- Watts, Fraser. "Psychology and theology." In *The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion*, edited by Peter Harrison, 190-206. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Watts, Fraser. *Psychology, Spirituality, and Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

- 2017.
- Watts, Fraser. "Theology and Science of Mental Health and Well-Being" *Zygon* 53,2 (2018): 336-355.
- Westermann, Claus. *Creation*. London: SPCK, 1974. Translated by John J. Scullion.
- White, Jr., Lynn. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155,3767 (1967): 1203-1207.
- Williams, Rowan. *On Christian Theology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.
- Williams, Rowan. *Christ the Heart of Creation*. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018.
- Williams, Rowan. *Looking East in Winter*. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2021.
- Wirzba, Norman. "Creation through Christ" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 35-53. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Wood, Alex M., Davidson, Adam T., Linley, P. Alex, Maltby, John, Harrington, Susan and Joseph, Stephen. "Applications of Positive Psychology" in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, edited by C.R. Snyder, Shane J. Lopez, Lisa M. Edwards, and Susana C. Marques, 43-58. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Wright, N.T. "Christ and the Cosmos: Kingdom and Creation in Gospel Perspective" in *Christ and the Created Order: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, edited by Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, 97-109. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2018.
- Yannaras, Christos. *Elements of Faith*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991.
- Yannaras, Christos. *Person and Eros*. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007.
- Zelazo, Philip David. "Developmental Psychology: A New Synthesis" in *The Oxford Handbook of Developmental Psychology, Vol. 1: Body and Mind*, edited by Philip David Zelazo, 3-11. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Zizioulas, John D. *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985.
- Zizioulas, John D. *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today*. Alhambra, California: Sebastian Press, 2010.