

# Preface

The Incarnation, celebrated by millions every Christmas, has been one of the central doctrines for Christians over the centuries. Nevertheless, many have objected that the doctrine is incoherent, for being divine seems to entail having properties such as being omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent; but the New Testament portrays Jesus as having human properties, such as being apparently limited in knowledge, power and presence. It seems logically impossible that any single individual could possess such mutually exclusive sets of properties.

This book aims to provide a critical reflection of various attempts to answer these challenges and to offer a more compelling response compared to what is available in the literature. This will be accomplished by developing a new model for the coherence of the Incarnation: the Divine Preconscious Model (DPM), which distinctively avoids the problems which have been elaborated in recent literature (see Chapter 3) besetting the three most widely discussed models in the literature, viz.:

- Two Consciousnesses Model. This faces problems concerning whether Christ would have two contradictory self-consciousnesses simultaneously and whether there could be an I–Thou relationship between these consciousnesses, both of which imply Nestorianism.
- Standard Ontological Kenotic Model. On the understanding of God as the greatest possible being for whom ‘all things are possible’ (Gen. 18:14, Matt. 19:26, Luke 1:37 etc.) and whose greatness is related to the greatness of his knowledge and power (Ps. 147:4–5), this model faces the question of whether a divine person would still be divine after giving up his omnipotence and omniscience.
- Divine Subconscious Model. This faces problems which have been raised against the model proposed by the Oxford theologian William Sanday, such as whether a Monophysite mixture would result.

By postulating that Jesus had only one consciousness, DPM is able to maintain the unity of his person, thus avoiding the problem with the Two Consciousnesses

Model. By postulating that the Logos possessed divine properties in virtue of his divine preconscious, DPM is able to maintain the true divinity of Jesus, thus avoiding the problem with Ontological Kenoticism. By postulating that the divine preconscious was not part of his human nature but was part of his divine nature, and that the divine nature and human nature were concrete and distinct parts of Christ, DPM avoids a Monophysite mixture.

I shall show that DPM also illuminates other difficult issues, such as whether Christ has one will (Monothelitism) or two wills (Dyothelitism), physicalist versus non-physicalist account of the Incarnation, and problems related to the *communicatio idiomatum*.

I am grateful to the following publishers for permission to reproduce the contents of my articles in various parts of this monograph:

1. Oxford University Press – ‘Sanday’s Christology revisited’, *Journal of Theological Studies* 63 (2012): 187–97.
2. Cambridge University Press – ‘Divine omnipotence and moral perfection’, *Religious Studies* 46 (2010): 525–38; ‘Solving a paradox against concrete-composite Christology: a modified hylomorphic proposal’, *Religious Studies* 47 (2011): 493–502.
3. Notre Dame University Press – ‘On the an-enhypostasia distinction and three-part concrete-nature Christology: the Divine Preconscious Model’. *Journal of Analytic Theology* 2 (2014): 101–16.
4. Wiley-Blackwell – ‘On the use of psychological models in Christology’, *The Heythrop Journal* (online October 2012); ‘The Incarnation and Jesus’ apparent limitation of knowledge’, *New Blackfriars* 94 (2013): 583–602; ‘On Dyothelitism versus Monothelitism: the Divine Preconscious Model’. *The Heythrop Journal* (online August 2013).
5. De Gruyter – ‘On the coherence of the Incarnation: the Divine Preconscious Model’, *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 51 (2009): 50–63; ‘Immaterialist, materialist, and substance dualist accounts of Incarnation’, *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 54 (2012): 414–23.

While the book synthesizes the contents of these articles, there are significant amounts of new material in the book which is not found in my earlier works. This new material includes:

1. Engagement with the views of a variety of theologians and theological traditions throughout history e.g. Cyril and Nestorius on impassibility

- (Section 4.4.4), Lutheran and Reformed theologians concerning *communicatio idiomatum* (Section 4.5), Boethius and Eutyches on parts Christology (Section 4.5), Aquinas on the foetal Jesus (Section 5.3.3), Calvin on the *extra calvinisticum* (Section 6.2).
2. DPM and the issue of divine impassibility (Section 4.4.4), an issue which is extremely significant historically as a driving force behind Christological debates.
  3. DPM and the issue of omnipotence and Jesus' conscious awareness (Section 5.3.3), including the highly interesting question of whether Jesus maintained conscious awareness when he was a foetus and when he slept.
  4. The analysis of DPM as Partial Functional Kenoticism and 'Krypsis C' (Section 6.2).
  5. Replies to objections by John Hick concerning Kryptic Christology (Section 6.2).
  6. Whether (on DPM) the limitation of the Logos in his incarnate state would last forever (Section 6.3).
  7. Analyses of various metaphysical and theological issues concerning the bearers for divine and human properties (Chapters 4 and 7).
  8. An assessment of the religious power of Ontological Kenoticism (Chapters 3 and 6).
  9. Addressing the issue of simplicity as a criterion for comparing the plausibility of various models of the Incarnation (Chapter 7).

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