BY THINE AGONY AND BLOODY SWEAT
Dogmatic Description of the Double Agency of Christ —
A Modest Proposal

by

PATRICK D. M. PATTERSON

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Abstract

It is a theological commonplace that 'classical' christology is incompetent to comprehend the authentic humanity of Christ. Alert to the charge but sympathetic to a 'neo-classical' approach, this paper addresses one aspect of the problem, namely, the properly dogmatic definition of Christ's divine and human agencies, with particular reference to the biblical locus classicus, Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane. My thesis is twofold. (i) Neo-classical christologies are able sufficiently to comprehend the double agency of Christ because they are able sufficiently to comprehend even the most provocative of biblical texts, epitomised by the narratives of Jesus' agony in Gethsemane. (ii) Their sufficiency depends upon their taking into account as of the utmost significance that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel and the seed of Abraham, in whom Yahweh the God of Israel has redeemed his people unto the blessing of the nations. My defence of the first part consists in careful exposition of the double agency of Christ according to John Meyendorff, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Karl Barth; defence of the second in theological commentary on the Gethsemane text in Luke. The final chapter rehearses the key dogmatic judgments that my readings of Meyendorff, Balthasar, and Barth and my exegesis of Gethsemane have demonstrated to be necessary to a sufficient dogmatic description of the double agency of Christ.
All biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

The George Grant epigraph is an excerpt from notes entitled “Obedience” found among Grant’s papers after his death. Never intended for publication, the notes were probably musings for an article, lecture, or book. The notes were eventually published in their original format by G. O. in *The Idler*, No. 29, July and August 1990.
... in memoriam,
George P. Schner SJ
It is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. 

Hebrews 2.16f

A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel. 

Nunc Dimittis

By his agony ... to save us from agony.

Maximus, Opuscula 16

The classic case of obedience is X [Christ]. the lamb led to the slaughter – suffers, yields

X. commands by beseeching.

George Grant, unpublished fragment
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Bibliography
Abbreviations

CD  Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*
KD  Karl Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*
PG  Patrologia Graeca
PL  Patrologia Latina
GL  Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*
TD  Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*
TL  Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic*
Introduction

It is a theological commonplace that 'classical' christology is incompetent to comprehend the authentic humanity of Christ.¹ Numerous endeavours have been undertaken, especially in the past two centuries, to provide more or less radically alternative descriptions. In recent years however there has been a renewal of interest in the classical formulae, yielding myriad and diverse christologies that we may loosely gather under the heading 'neo-classical'.² Their concern has been not merely to repeat unaltered, but to enlist as fruitful resource, the old formulae in the service of contemporary christological discourse, – to speak of Jesus Christ and the God of the gospel with an eye and ear open to holy scripture and tradition but also to contemporary concerns with agency, freedom, conflict, and culture.

Sharing a heightened sensitivity to the persistent accusation levelled against the tradition that it slights Christ's humanity, their diversity is due in part to the very different solutions they offer to that problem. Alert to the charge but sympathetic to

¹ 'Classical' is here used to refer to christology as defined in the dogmatic decrees of the ecumenical councils, especially Chalcedon (451) and Constantinople III (680-681).

² I have opted for 'neo-classical' only as apparently less problematic than others (e.g., incarnational, neo-chalcedonian, neo-orthodox, alexandrian, enhypostatic) that have been used to describe this family of christologies. For a helpful discussion of this mode of theology, see John Webster, “Theologies of Retrieval”, in The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology, eds. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, Iain Torrance (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 583-599.
the neo-classical approach, I propose to address one aspect of the same problem, namely, the properly dogmatic definition of Christ’s divine and human agencies.

My thesis is twofold. (i) Neo-classical christologies are able sufficiently to comprehend the divine and human agencies of Christ because they are able sufficiently to comprehend even the most provocative of biblical texts, epitomised by the narratives of Jesus’ agony in Gethsemane. (ii) Their sufficiency depends upon their taking into account as of the utmost significance that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel and the seed of Abraham, in whom Yahweh the God of Israel has redeemed his people unto the blessing of the nations.

With a view to a modest contribution to a more sufficient dogmatic description of Christ’s double agency, I have apprenticed myself to three recent theologians who have devoted serious attention to the subject. The Orthodox, John Meyendorff, offers a creative retrieval of the neo-Chalcedonian terminology and affirmations forged in the original controversy and its diothelite resolution at Constantinople III (680-681). The Catholic, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and the Protestant, Karl Barth, alert to the history, provide a more strictly dogmatic treatment of the theme. All three address the Gethsemane texts.

Paying minimal attention to secondary sources, and for the most part ignoring current controversies particularly in Barth and Balthasar studies, I concentrate on meticulous exposition of their own work. In Meyendorff’s case, that includes almost his entire output. In light of the immensity of Balthasar’s and Barth’s work I limit myself (more or less) to those works in which the theme receives its most intensive treatment: Balthasar’s *Theo-Drama* volumes 2 through 5 and *Theo-Logic* volume 2, and Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* volume 4, parts 1 and 2. Throughout, I endeavour to let “the matter itself”, dogmatic description of the divine-human agency of Jesus Christ, hold centre stage.³

³ “... what can be fruitfully said and argued theologically ... comes not out of all the familiar dialogues old and new, even granting an implicit or explicit regard to what this or that person had to say and still has to say, but ... out of the matter itself and with our faces set toward Jerusalem” (Karl Barth, *Letters: 1961-1968*, ed. Jürgen Fangmeier and Hinrich Stoevesandt, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981], 61 [hereafter cited as Barth, *Letters: 1961-68*]).
My analysis of their work is centered on their treatment of the delicate interrelationship between two distinguishing features of neo-classical christologies. They are also hallmarks of classical christology, but my authors define them and especially their interrelationship in significantly new and different ways, though not essentially in contradiction with the tradition. (1) All are agreed upon the primacy of the active agency of God the Son and Word of God, in the human existence of Jesus Christ. For them all, the acting subject who is the man Jesus Christ is the second Person of the triune God. (2) Yet, as complementary to this affirmation, indeed precisely because of it, they are equally attentive to the integrity of his humanity, including specifically his peculiarly human agency and activity – in perfect communion with, but also distinguishable from and not to be confused with, his properly divine agency and activity.

I focus my attention on the different ways in which they relate these two affirmations. My fuller treatment of their handling of the two themes may be briefly summarised.

1. For all of them, the kenosis of the Son plays its part. Meyendorff points to a critical distinction that must be maintained in any description of the incarnation between the second hypostasis of the Godhead which was *made flesh*, and the divine nature which was not. Balthasar interprets the self-emptying of the Son provocatively in terms of what he calls the trinitarian inversion entailed by the incarnation. Eternally, the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the activity of the Son; but during the time of his incarnate existence the Son is led by the Father through the activity of the Spirit. Barth deploys kenosis to denote the very essence of God so that the obedience and even the humiliation of Jesus is not in spite of but itself manifests and is, in the human mode, his eternal obedience as the Son of God.4

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4 See footnote to the sub-heading, *The Kenosis of the Son* (in Chapter 3 of this Thesis), for a discussion of the relatively minor part played by “kenosis” in Barth’s *CD.*
2. All three authors affirm the infinite qualitative distinction between God and the human creature (and created reality as a whole). Yet however profound the distinction, all of them want to reverse the traditional emphasis on their incompatibility, describing instead their non-competitive relationship in Christ.\(^5\) Meyendorff insists on their orientation to participation in one another, including the 'naturally' active cooperation of the human with the divine, in Jesus (and in Mary), albeit in response to the graciously initiatory activity of God. Balthasar articulates a strictly prescribed but authentic *analogia entis* in terms of the kenotic trinitarian inversion of the incarnation. The mutual coordination of human and divine natures in Christ – in Balthasar's preferred theodramatic terms, of person and role/mission – is brought to perfection in the incarnate activity, including the peculiarly human decisions, of the Son in obedience to the Father through the Spirit. That coordination is demonstrable through analysis of Christ's consciousness as a human subject. In Barth, the proud self-assertion of the old Adam over against God belongs to the humanity assumed by the Son. It is however never allowed to get a hold on him. Rather, by his own obedience *unto death* he consistently contradicts its contradictory orientation to disobedience. The ontological *enhypostasis* of his humanity in his divine person is concretely and consistently enacted in his incarnate existence. Jesus Christ, the only-begotten of the Father, enacts in true human freedom the obedience that is his eternal nature, thereby reconciling the world to God, in accord with God's eternal decision to be God only with and for the creature in the same Jesus Christ.

My guiding principle in the three chapters of theological apprenticeship is what Barth, near the end of his life, called "a canon of all research in theological history".\(^6\) Bewailing the formulaic sterility of much of the mounting supply of secondary material

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\(^5\) I am indebted to Kathryn Tanner's account of what she calls the "non-competitive" relation between the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ (Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress (with T&T Clark, Edinburgh), 2001], Chapter 1, esp. 4-9; also, Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?*, [Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1988], 152).

on his own work, he proposed, “that one should try to present what has engaged
another person ... as something living, as something that moved him ... and that ...
move[s] oneself too; to unfold it in such a way that, even if one finally takes some other
route, the path of this other has an enticing, or, if you like, a tempting attraction for
oneself”.7 Though my expositions of my chosen authors are necessarily severely
abbreviated, I have worked hard to avoid their being reductionist, “... slogans, formulae,
and labels ... [that] sound to me like coffin-lids and gravestones”; 8 endeavouring
instead to reflect their subtlety, complexity, and vitality of thought and expression.9

My authors are all committed to dogmatic investigation in close conversation
with biblical exegesis. In this respect, Leo serves Meyendorff as a model. "Leo’s
intention was not to speculate about the very meaning of the union of the two natures
in Christ but to reintroduce the common sense of the Bible, in which Jesus appeared
clearly as both God and man".10 Balthasar is convinced that "the canonical Scriptures
... through the Holy Spirit" are "sufficient to form an adequate basis for theological

Theology", in Karl Barth, Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History,
esp. 5-10.


9 “Modern academic writing is strewn with impertinent précis written by those who think they can say in
fewer words what wiser men than they have said in more” (George Grant, “Tyranny and Wisdom”, in
education is the tendency to put even the very great into neat pigeon holes, and therefore put them safely
away. This is part of ‘technological’ training. The thinker in question is placed at our disposal, like
standing reserve, and is made accessible to us” (George Grant, “notes for a lecture, McMaster University,
1978”, in The George Grant Reader, eds. William Christian, Sheila Grant [Toronto: University of Toronto
Press, 1998], 299).

10 John Meyendorff, Christ in Eastern Christian Thought (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press,
Christ’s redemptive act has been completed once and for all, that nothing can be added to it, and that
there is no other way of benefiting from it but by hearing the word of God proclaimed by the ‘witnesses’"
(John Meyendorff, "The Meaning of Tradition", in Living Tradition: Orthodox Witness in the
Contemporary World [Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978], 13 [hereafter cited as
"Tradition"]).
reflection down through all the centuries, providing that such reflection sees the individual text in the context of the whole, expressed by the totality of Scripture”. And Barth asserts, “Dogmatics ... is the art whose law points us to Holy Scripture as the decisive norm without whose validity and observance it becomes sheer bungling .... What finally counts is whether a dogmatics is scriptural”.  

In the original controversy and down to the present, the biblical *locus classicus* has been Christ’s anguished prayer in Gethsemane with its apparent conflict of will between Jesus and his Father. Is the conflict real or only apparent? If it is real, is it intra-christological – between the humanity and deity of Christ, or intra-trinitarian –

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13 The diothelite decrees of Constantinople III were forged primarily through the interchange of competing interpretations by Sergius the Grammarian and Maximus the Confessor. See Appendix 2 for my translations of Maximus’ *Opuscula* 6 and selections from his *Disputation with Pyrrhus*, which include some of his most significant discussions of Gethsemane.

14 There is no problem for christologies that reject classical incarnationalism. Thus, for example, if Jesus’ so-called deity is redescribable as a dimension of his humanity, if in other words he is not so much God as god-ly, Gethsemane may be read as archetypal of the ‘dark night of the soul’. If ‘incarnation’ is radically redefined as a process of ascent in which the man Jesus of Nazareth is deified, becoming ‘Son of God’ at his resurrection (whether epistemologically, for us, or ontologically, for him and us), Gethsemane might be read as part of that process; Jesus’ plumbing of the depths of human suffering and despair on the way towards his eventual breakthrough to union/identity with God, the reward of his faithfulness and endurance.
between the Son and the Father, or both? In classical terms, how are we to maintain in light of this prayer the unity of Christ’s person as the incarnate Son and Word of God and the integrity of his unconfused yet undivided deity and humanity? In neo-classical terms, how are we to maintain the non-competitive transparency of Christ’s humanity to his deity? If (as Maximus insisted) the prayer does not represent conflict of will, how is one to account for the not... but? I have concluded my treatment of each author with an account of his reading of Gethsemane. In Chapter 4, I offer my own exposition.

The questions raised by the Gethsemane prayer point towards the contemporary dogmatic problem occasioned by the church’s confession of Christ’s double agency. Meyendorff puts it this way. “Is a true humanity possible when the origin of its actions and its very life is the divine hypostasis of the Logos?”15 Balthasar’s version is as follows. “Here is an issue ... that will have to be settled once and for all: Is the man Jesus, in his temporal dimension, only the manifestation of a divine decision that is prior to his entire existence (and is to that extent ‘alien’)? That is, can he only ‘subsequently’ ratify what has already been decided concerning him and the world? Or can his human freedom ... exercise its rightful privilege of being able to make its own decisions?”16 Barth is provoked by the first of the Gospel predictions of the passion, “‘The Son of Man must [dei] suffer many things’. This ‘must’ was and is decisive. ‘Must’ He do this even though He is the Son of Man, the royal man? Must He do it in spite of this fact and in opposition to it? Or must He do it just because and as He is this man? Must He do it in the service of an alien necessity, or in ineluctable fulfillment of His mission, the reconciliation of the world with God which it is His task to accomplish? Must He do it as a great concession, even submission, to a cosmic law whose power He cannot escape, or is it an observance of the will of God, the fulfilling of

15 Meyendorff, Christ, 167.

16 Balthasar, TD 3, 197.
all righteousness (Mt 3.15), and therefore the discharge of His royal office in an act of perfect obedience?”

The answers of my authors, dogmatic and exegetical, reflect their commitment to a thickness of description of both the divine and the human agency of Christ beyond what has hitherto been achieved. My own contribution will press for even greater concreteness in one aspect of Christ’s identity variously pursued though insufficiently by all of my authors: that he is, originally and determinatively, the Messiah of Israel and the seed of Abraham in whom Yahweh the God of Israel has redeemed his elect unto the blessing of the nations. The order of my readings of the three reflects the extent (lesser to greater) to which they approach that greater concreteness.

With my analyses of Meyendorff, Balthasar, and Barth in hand, I will introduce my proposal in Chapter 4 with a preliminary summary of certain dogmatic judgments that are entailed by the affirmation of the doctrine of the two wills of Christ. I will then undertake my own reading of Gethsemane with particular reference to the indelibly and determinatively Jewish identity of Jesus. I shall show that the unconfused unity of Christ’s human and divine agencies is exemplified in Gethsemane precisely as the text is read as the narrative of the agony of Israel’s Messiah. Jesus embodies in himself the elect people of God in their covenant partnership, for better and for worse, with God. In face of the Day, the Hour, of Yahweh’s final judgment of his people, Israel’s Messiah prays (in the spirit of Abraham, Moses, and the prophets) for one more stay of execution, one more year in which to cultivate and fertilise the fruitless vine (Lk13:6-9). It is Israel’s prayer. “I will not let you go unless you bless me” (Gn 32.26). It is the prayer of Israel's God. “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O

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17 Barth, CD 4/2, 255; in more general terms, Ibid., 6, 19.

18 The church is rendered available to the fullness of the biblical testimony to the gospel through the richness and ever replenished diversity of its readings of that same testimony. I therefore make no exclusive claim for my own, hoping that it more often complements than competes with others. My primary concern is neither to contradict nor to agree with any of them but, variously indebted to them, to offer my theological exposition in the service of the church’s ongoing task of approaching a dogmatically sufficient description of the double agency of Christ.
Israel? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender” (Hos 11.8). It is in other words the prayer of the incarnate Son of God.

Nevertheless, the terrible day of the Lord has come. It cannot and will not be delayed further. So Israel's Messiah, “faithful over God's house as a son” (Heb 3.6), possessing in himself the elect and persistently rebellious people of God, his people, consents to drink the cup of Yahweh's fierce anger, to be himself the object of God's awful judgment. In the unfathomable wisdom of Israel's God, the last judgment of Israel in the person of Israel's Messiah is itself Israel's vindication, the justification of the unrighteous to the glory of God and the blessing of the nations, “as he promised to our ancestors, Abraham and his seed forever” (Lk 1.55). In Israel, in Israel's Messiah crucified and risen from the dead, Yahweh himself, in person, has displayed “the utmost patience [for] ... an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life” (1 Tm 1.16).

All of this is given in the agony of Christ in Gethsemane, not least on account of his refusal to go his way except in the company of 'the Twelve'. They are Israel, rebel and redeemed, lost and found, because he has made them ingredient in his own identity. But this is only given as the prayer (too often treated in isolation) is read in its immediate and extended context. The whole of Scripture provides that context, yet there are paradigmatic moments that epitomise it. Without pretending to be exhaustive, I shall undertake my reading of Gethsemane with reference to a selection of the outstanding epitomes.

A brief concluding chapter recites the key dogmatic judgments that apprenticeship to Meyendorff, Balthasar, and Barth and theological exegesis of

19 As will be seen, one of my criticisms of some of my authors is their relative neglect of context.

20 My primary referent is Gethsemane (in the Synoptics); but secondarily the reference is backward to anticipatory glimpses in the Synoptics (e.g., the temptations, the rebuke of Peter, the transfiguration, the passion predictions, the last supper); forward especially to the cry of abandonment; across to the Johanine parallels (6:38; 12:27f; 17). Heb 5:7-10, and Phil 2:5-11; and finally further back to Old Testament anticipations (Abraham at Sodom, Moses' intercessory self-offering at Sinai, Elijah's, Jeremiah's, and Jonah's seasons of despair, Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah's servant songs).
Gethsemane and related texts have demonstrated to be necessary to a sufficient
dogmatic description of the double agency of Christ. They are sufficient because
attentive to the fullness and integrity of both his divine and his human agencies as well
as to the unity of his person. Ancient and modern incarnational christologies of the
hypostatic union of divine and human natures and activities sufficiently comprehend
the divine and human agency of Jesus Christ in so far as they are defined by and in turn
define the biblical witness to Yahweh’s faithfulness to Israel for the sake of Israel’s
faithfulness to him in that same Jesus Christ, “your salvation, which you have prepared
in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your
people Israel” (Lk 2.30ff).

I have said that my apprenticeship to Meyendorff, Balthasar, and Barth has
instilled a determination to do theology that is consistently informed by biblical
exegesis. I have devoted a significant part of my fourth chapter to theological exposition
of Scripture. Space does not permit me to offer a thorough account and defence of my
hermeneutical course of action. I will limit myself to a brief summary of certain
theological commitments which inform my readings.

One of the first acts of the English Reformation, at the initiative of Henry VIII’s
Vicar-General, Thomas Cromwell, was the placing of an English Bible in every church
in the Realm. On Sundays and holy-days throughout the year the curate in every parish
church was instructed to read a chapter of the New Testament in English “without any
disputation or exposition”, and when the New Testament was read over, to begin the
Old.21 Various reasons might be offered for the injunction. Theologically, it may be
taken to signify something important about Scripture, namely, that it is “independent
of, and prior to, the church’s exposition of Scripture, and the church relates to it, in the
first place, simply by reading it aloud and only secondly by preaching”.22

[References]

21 Francis Proctor and Walter Howard Frere, A New History of the Book of Common Prayer With a
Rationale of its Offices (London: Macmillan and Co Ltd, 1958), 30f. I have conflated Cromwell’s action
in 1538 and the injunction issued by the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury in 1543, three years
after Cromwell’s death.

22 Oliver O’Donovan, On the Thirty Nine Articles: A Conversation with Tudor Christianity (Exeter: The
Far from being raw material waiting to be put to work, Scripture has an eccentric integrity: eccentric, because its centre is outside itself in that to which it bears witness; integrity, because it is granted from above to bear faithful witness. As testimony to the triune God of the gospel, Scripture participates in the character of that God as the One “whom we do not measure and define but by whom we are measured and defined”. The Church’s exposition and interpretation of Scripture will endeavour to attend to and respect that eccentric integrity without yielding to the ever-present temptation to possess, to preside over, to dominate it as an object at our disposal.

It is remarkable that, even among those who insist that Scripture is the “soul of theology”, instances of explicitly theological exegesis of biblical texts are rare. Without it, however, it is difficult to avoid the pitfalls of what David Tracy has called the “heresy of paraphrase” and George Lindbeck, “translation theology”, dogmatic

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23 George Grant, Philosophy in the Mass Age (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1959), 100.

24 “It is thus our task to relate our words back to these [the divine words of scripture]; ours must be tested by these .... It is not that these should be examined by us, but that we should be judged by them” (Martin Luther, Assertio omnium articulorum M. Lutheri per bullam Leonis X [1520], in WA 7: 98, 4-6; quoted by Mark S. Burrows, “Selections from Martin Luther’s Sermons on the Sermon of the Mount”, in The Theological Interpretation of Scripture, ed. Stephen E. Fowl [Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997], 249). The proper attitude which the theologian ought to take towards Holy Scripture is well expressed in Ulrich Luz’s description of St Paul’s approach to the Old Testament: “For Paul, the Old Testament is not in the first place something to understand, but itself creates understanding” (Ulrich Luz, Das Geschichtsverständnis, 134, quoted by Anthony C. Thiselton, “Introduction”, in Canon and Biblical Interpretation, eds. Craig Bartholomew, Scott Hahn, Robin Parry, Christopher Seitz, Al Wolters [Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2006], 2).

25 Fitzmyer, Scripture, the Soul of Theology. Fitzmyer’s title is derived from the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Vatican II, 24.
explication that serves to supplant rather than enhance the Church’s attentive hearing of the biblical word.  

The risen Christ manifests himself in and with the text of Holy Scripture. His personal identity is given in and with the matter and form, the grammar and syntax of the biblical texts. Nor does he give himself alone, in isolation. As a son of Israel, he comes in and with the children of Israel, the elect in the company of the elect. And their identity is as specific as his own, given in the particularities of the Scriptures.

The specificity of their identity derives from their election and vocation at the hands of almighty God. Holy Scripture emerges from the intersection of God’s enacted decision to elect them and their determination as God’s elect. But Scripture represents that intersection asymmetrically. All along the way the human covenant partner is summoned, commanded, exhorted, rebuked, warned, consoled, by the divine covenant partner. Even where the text is most expressive of human lamentation or aspiration (as in certain psalms, for example), the underlying initiative lies with God. And the pattern that is set in the Old Testament is only confirmed and intensified in the New.

If we would hear and observe the testimony of Scripture at the divinely constituted intersection of elector and elect, if we would attend to the identity of Israel and Israel’s Messiah ingredient in the biblical text, we would do well to take up recent appeals for a renewed concentration on literal or plain sense readings of Scripture.

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The reader is not thereby relieved from attending to the multivalence of human discourse, figurative language, metaphorical expression, parable, irony, and the like. But, s/he is responsible to reckon with the texts in terms of their ostensible and unsubstitutable subject, the triune God in his salvific activity in Israel and consummately in Israel’s Messiah, Jesus. So to read the texts is to grant primacy to their literal or plain sense.

My fourth chapter is an experiment in dogmatic theology in the mode of “marginal notes” to the biblical text, “a kind of gloss on Scripture – a discursive reiteration or indication of the truth of the Christian gospel as it is encountered in the Bible” The genre is commentary, a “running paraphrase or expansion” of the text


Cf., “... cum omnes sensus fundentur super unum, scilicet litteralem; ex quo solo potest trahi argumentum, non autem ex his quae secundum allegoriam dicuntur .... Non tamen ex hoc aliquid deperit sacrae Scripturae, quia nihil sub spirituali sensu continetur fidei necessarium, quod Scriptura per litteralem sensum aliqui manifeste tradat” [...] all the senses (of Scripture) are based on one, namely the literal, from which alone an argument can be drawn, and not from those which are said by way of allegory [...] Yet nothing is lost to sacred Scripture because of this, because nothing necessary for faith is contained in the spiritual sense, which Scripture does not clearly pass on elsewhere by the literal sense] (Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae 1, q. 1, a. 10 ad 1).

29 Barth offered several descriptions of the Bible during his career. The account in the early sections of the Church Dogmatics is of particular interest here (esp. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol. 1, The Doctrine of the Word of God, Part 2, eds. G. W. Bromiley & T. F. Torrance, trans. G. T. Thomson & Harold Knight (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 510-511 (hereafter, CD 1/2). David Demson offers the following summary paraphrase: “The Bible as the witness to divine revelation is a Jewish book. It cannot be read and understood unless we openly accept the language and thought and history of the Jews, unless we are prepared to become Jews with the Jews [... This is no less true of the New Testament than of the Old Testament. It is Jews who attest God’s election and calling of Israel and the Christian community and finally all flesh to new life. It is Israelites – and necessarily Israelites, since as the appointed witnesses to revelation they belong to revelation – who attest to this election and calling to new life. If we want it otherwise we will have to strike out both the Old Testament and the New Testament” (David Demson, “Barth’s Various Descriptions of the Bible”, Karl Barth Society Newsletter no. 25 (Summer 2002): 4, 5-6).


31 Webster, Holy Scripture, 130.
that foregoes preoccupation with its “historical genesis”, and that is content to be “unsystematic, in that it eschews reorganising the material, preferring to let its own logic stand without submitting it to pressure to conform to external schemes”.

Sufficient biblical work would, as I have already said, require a comprehensive study of the whole of Scripture. What I offer here is a modest contribution to that larger task, namely, a reading of Gethsemane in terms of two themes which I have chosen to pursue in their wider biblical context: the integral connection between the fatherhood of God and the covenant; and the figure of the intercessory mediator who, in face of God’s impending judgment, steps into the breach on behalf of the people of God. Both themes will be seen to shed light on the identity and activity of Christ in Gethsemane, thereby contributing towards a more sufficiently concrete dogmatic description of the double agency of Christ.

The title of this thesis is a fragment of prayer from the Great Litany of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. A section of the Litany is a series of obsecrations,

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32 Webster, Holy Scripture, 132-3. Cf., “the procedures for reading Scripture are governed by the patterns and procedures embedded in Scripture” (Demson, Frei and Barth, vi).

33 “… dogmas must never be used to forestall the results of exegesis. The latter orientated by dogma in its approach to the testimony will always be eo ipso a critical challenge to dogmatic statements. But this challenge cannot spring from the exegesis of any one particular Biblical passage, but only from a comprehensive survey of the Biblical testimony as a whole. Dogmas do not invoke any isolated texts as dicta probantia – it may be that they cannot even cite any specific text at all from their formal legitimation, as is the case with the dogma of the Trinity – but rest upon the testimony of Scripture as a whole” (Hermann Diem, Dogmatics, trans. Harold Knight [Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1959], 304).

34 “Several unifying themes run through scripture, though no one theme encompasses every single book. Expounding one such theme is a perfectly valid activity for a biblical theologian. Criticisms of the search for the center are well-taken, but this does not mean that search for a focal point is illegitimate …. Scripture is not, as some critics of the Mitte hypotheses seem to hold, a random form or a shifting shape without boundaries” (Benjamin D. Sommer, “Dialogical Biblical Theology: A Jewish Approach to Reading Scripture Theologically”, in Biblical Theology: Introducing the Conversation, eds. Leo G Perdue, Robert Morgan, Benjamin D. Sommer [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009], 4-5).
pleas for mercy offered on the basis of successive moments in the career of the incarnate Word. The fifth petition, “By thine agony and bloody sweat, good Lord deliver us”, deploys the language of St Luke’s description of Jesus in Gethsemane. It is fitting that my title should be in the mode of prayer, as theology’s object is originally, finally, and all along the way subject, one who is to be worshipped before he is to be understood.35 Theology’s besetting temptation is to preside over its subject. Informed by prayer, it may be delivered from that temptation for the more modest task of “indicat[ing] the presence and activity of the Word”, bearing “awed testimony to the critical and consoling presence of God in the Spirit’s power, set before the church in Holy Scripture”.


36 Webster, Holy Scripture, 126.
Cooperative Synergy
The Double Agency Of Christ According To John Meyendorff

The Deity of Christ

At the heart of Meyendorff's christology is the conviction that salvation belongs to God, that it is uniquely God's prerogative to save.37 God does not save the world by divine fiat, nor is he at one remove – only indirectly inspiring a human or even superhuman intermediary.38 Instead, God is the direct agent and unique subject of his saving deed. More specifically, God the Son of God, the second hypostasis of the Godhead,


personally enacts in the flesh the saving purpose of God in the power of the Spirit to the glory of the Father.39

This specification of the Son does not imply any qualification of the presence and activity of the Godhead. In the incarnation, God holds back nothing of himself. The salvation wrought by the incarnate Son is no less nor other than the self-giving of the triune God essentially and directly to the world.40

The Son enacts salvation humanly, and Meyendorff will have much to say about that. But, for the present and in the first place he insists the personal identity of Jesus, the incarnate one, is none other than God, the Son of God. There is no other subject, no second human person.41 Accordingly, the humanity, the flesh of Christ has no independent existence but is truly God's flesh. The Logos made it his own, not merely cooperating with it or even interpenetrating it, but uniting it to himself absolutely.42 God, the Son of God is the sole agent, the personal, acting subject and source of the totality of the human experiences and acts, the human life, of Jesus – and that without compromise to his essential deity.43

39 "His 'I' – the ultimate subject – was not a human person, but the divine Logos, Second Person of the Trinity" ("Christ's Humanity", 18, cf., 30, 32; also, Byzantine Theology, 40).


42 Byzantine Theology, 155; cf., Christ, 21, 72.

43 Christ, 18; “Christ's Humanity”, 7-8.
The classical doctrines of Christ's pre-existence, the hypostatic union, the asymmetry of Christ’s deity and humanity, and the anhypostatic/enhypostatic character of his humanity lie behind Meyendorff’s neo-classical reaffirmation of the deity of Christ.44 Again, the affirmation is not an end in itself but serves to undergird the lasting soteriological force of the gospel. Humanity, even the human merits of the man Jesus, could not defeat the powers of sin and death. God alone could set the creation free from its bondage to decay. Therefore, God the Word assumed created human nature and made it his own.45

The Humanity of Christ

Meyendorff affirms the primacy of the Son's agency in the constitution of the incarnate one, but it is the integrity of the human nature assumed by the Son that absorbs the bulk of his attention. Not surprisingly, as the Byzantine theological tradition within which he places himself is often accused of crypto-monophysitism. Meyendorff sets himself to answer the charge. "Is a true humanity possible when the origin of its actions and its very life is the divine hypostasis of the Logos?"46 Or, more simply, "was Jesus also truly a man?"47

44 *Byzantine Theology*, 154; also, "Christ's Humanity", 13.

45 *Christ*, 18.


47 "Christ's Humanity", 13.
There are two aspects to Meyendorff’s response: clarification of what a hypostasis is and is not; and delineation of the human as such.\(^48\) I shall return to his description of hypostasis when I come to his treatment of the Son’s *kenosis*. For the present it is sufficient to observe that there is a real distinction between nature and hypostasis, such that the latter is not reducible to a part or the whole of either divine or human nature: it is neither a divine nor a human characteristic; in particular, it is not human consciousness. Rather is it "the ultimate source of individual, personal existence, which, in Christ, is both divine and human".\(^49\) The incarnate Son, Jesus, while eternally possessing the fullness of divine nature, assumed and possessed the fullness of human nature without compromise to either. It is the peculiar character of his hypostatic or personal identity, that he is able to have so united the two natures in himself. It is the fact that it was the second hypostasis of the Godhead and not the divine nature that became human that formally guarantees the authenticity of his humanity.\(^50\)

Meyendorff substantiates that formal guarantee with an account of what he calls a characteristically Eastern theocentric anthropology. The human creature is at once created for and destined to participation in God.\(^51\) This natural orientation, including the inherent freedom to pursue it, constitutes the image of God.\(^52\) As image to prototype the freedom of the human creature resembles and points to the sovereign

\(^{48}\) “New Life”, 157.

\(^{49}\) *Byzantine Theology*, 48.

\(^{50}\) *Byzantine Theology*, 44, 142.

\(^{51}\) *Byzantine Theology*, 2, 133; "Christ's Humanity", 19, 21; "Creation", 29; "Confessing Christ", 127.

\(^{52}\) "Confessing Christ", 122; *Christ*, 114; "New Life", 158, 160; *Catholicity*, 22.
freedom of God, more than that, is an actual "sharing in the Creator's 'freedom and self-determination'". The Logos of God is humanity's "prototype", so that in becoming human he "came into His own' and 'was known by His own' (John 10:14)".

He was at home – fittingly, authentically himself.

The image/archetype schema explains why there was not a mere juxtaposition but a real union, a natural fit, in the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in Christ. The natural properties of each, including their distinct activities and energies, their agencies, are preserved (indeed, in the case of human nature, "re-established"), unconfused and uncompromised.

No alteration or diminution of humanness was

53 "New Life", 160.

54 "Creation", 35. Whereas, freedom as absolute “undetermined” self-sufficiency is the "most basic of divine attributes ", its image in human creatures is derivative, "by 'participation'" ("Christian Dogma", 87).

55 "New Life", 160; also "Archetype" (Christ, 125, 160; “New Life”, 161 [see whole section, 157-61]) and "Model" ("Christ's Humanity", 31).

56 "Christ's Humanity", 21.

Meyendorff supplies only the one reference in John, but in fact the first phrase is from John 1.11 where it is immediately followed by the phrase, "and his own did not receive him". To anticipate what I will try to show is the chief shortcoming in Meyendorff's work, the omission of this phrase and the conflation of John 1.11 and 10.14 allows him to deploy them as evidence of the mutual openness of the divine and human natures without apparently considering the possibility (and implications to be explored later) of "his own" referring not to humanity as such (cf., John 1.10), but to Israel.

57 "Jesus is the perfect man, not in spite of His being also perfect God, but because He is also God" ("Confessing Christ", 122, italics original; cf., "New Life", 166; Byzantine Theology, 164).

58 Palamas, 169.

59 Christ, 210; Byzantine Theology, 39, 154.
required for the Son to become human. Indeed, as the model according to which all other human beings are made, he is more perfectly, more authentically, human than they.

"The Word became flesh to honor the flesh, even this mortal flesh". His honouring the flesh included his submitting himself to the limits and circumstances of actual human life: the processes of natural growth from birth to death; temporality understood as a process, not single moments assessable in isolation from one another; embodiment, not in the Platonic sense of an intelligence locked in flesh longing to be set free, but in the biblical sense of "a psycho-physiological whole". The Son of God took that whole without remainder to himself, thereby comprehensively redeeming and deifying the whole of it.

The concrete particularity, the embodied historicity of the man, Jesus, is liable to be lost sight of when his humanity is conceptualised solely as human nature. The

60 "The humanity of Jesus should therefore be understood as identical to ours" ("Christ's Humanity", 27, cf., 8).


62 Byzantine Theology, 142, quoting, Gregory Palamas, Homilies 16 (PG 157:204a).

63 Byzantine Theology, 38.

64 "Christ's Humanity", 26.

65 Palamas, 137-9; cf., "$\text{"If some Hellenes are light-headed enough to believe that the gods live inside idols, their thought remains much purer than that \text{[of the Christians]} who believe that the divinity entered the Virgin Mary's womb, became a foetus, was engendered, and wrapped in clothes, was full of blood, membranes, gall, and even viler things" (Byzantine Theology, 43, quoting, Porphyry, Against the Christians, fragment 77, ed. A Harnack, AbhBerLak [1916], 93).}"

66 Palamas, 138.
term's lack of specificity can suggest a "Platonizing view of humanity in general", insufficient to account for the "concrete, historical, human individual" that is Jesus. Human nature does not exist ideally, but only in Peter and Paul – and Jesus, "otherwise Christ's human nature could only have been intellectually contemplated, and Thomas's experience, placing his finger into Jesus' wound, would have been impossible".

The second hypostasis of the Godhead, and not a human hypostasis, is the ultimate source of Jesus' individual, personal existence. Nonetheless, that individuality is manifest humanly so that we may properly say that Jesus was a human individual. Meyendorff takes over Leontius of Jerusalem's distinction between an individual and a particular human being to delineate the uniqueness of Christ's human individuality. The man, Jesus, stands with other men and women as an indubitably recognisable human individual, his individuality as complete as theirs. However, because its mysterious source is not a human hypostasis, as it is for all other human beings, his individuality is not solitary, impervious to the individuality of others, "particularised", but includes all others in and with itself. In his incarnation, in his individual human life, the Son unites all of humankind to himself.

Embodied, the incarnate Son was also ensouled. Impatient with all attempts to provide a psychological analysis of Jesus, Meyendorff nevertheless underlines the fact of Jesus' human consciousness. He knew and felt humanly all that other human beings

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67 *Byzantine Theology*, 47, 159.

68 *Christ*, 185-6, paraphrasing Theodore the Studite, *Antirrhetic* 3 (*PG* 99:396c-397a). The commitment to Jesus' human individuality was hammered out in the seventh century iconoclastic crisis, not least by Theodore the Studite, a prominent exponent of anti-iconoclastic orthodoxy.

69 *Christ*, 154, 159

70 *Christ*, 74.

experience. Most acutely, he lived under the shadow of death, knowing and experiencing in all its human ramifications the approach of his own death. He ordered his life humanly: his decisions and renunciations were determined in and by his human psyche. The "directing principle ['the ἥγεμονικὸν']" (variously named soul, mind, intellect, nous) in the incarnate life of the Son was the same as in every human individual. Contrary to ancient or more recent forms of Apollinarianism, this primary human dynamic was not in Jesus displaced by the Logos.

The fourth century Nicaeans opposed the Arians and the Apollinarians, both of whom taught that in Christ the Logos had taken the place of the human intellect. However, "their anti-Apollinarianism remained vaguer [than their anti-Arianism] and produced no positive conciliar definition". That task remained unfinished until the monothelite and monenergist controversies of the seventh century when the church hammered out its doctrines of Christ's authentically human will and 'energy'. Leaving behind the archaisms of classical diothelites like Maximus, Meyendorff describes what they intended by 'will' and 'energy' as the directing principle, the "vitality and dynamism" of the human creature, which Jesus possessed and lived by exactly as we do. Christ's humanity was not a passive instrument of God. Rather, he exercised in time a true human freedom, an "active human cooperation" in the saving deed of God.

72 Christ, 20.

73 Christ, 15.

74 Christ, 15, 20.


75 "Christ's Humanity", 30, paraphrasing, Maximus the Confessor, Opuscula 6 (PG 91, col. 68d); cf., Byzantine Theology, 38.
Meyendorff is quick to remind us that it is always and only the Son and Logos of God who is this humanly free "personal agent", who "exercised human freedom – to redeem it". Indeed, 'energy' and 'will', though properties of 'nature', are never "impersonal manifestations". The divine will is trinitarian and interpersonal, exercised by the three divine hypostases. Similarly, human activity is personally (hypostatically) enacted. It is not human nature but personal agents who will and act.

A proper insistence upon the divine identity of the subject of the will and activity of Jesus must not be allowed to obscure an equally robust account of his authentically human freedom. Meyendorff insists upon what he calls the "created autonomy" of human nature (and of all creation). God has not created mere "phenomena", phantoms and mirages, but a new order essentially distinct from his own, worthy of his love and concern. Possessed of an inherent purposiveness, "there is a sense in which its meaning is found in itself".

In becoming human the Word did not suppress humanity's created autonomy. His human nature is not a mere phenomenon of his deity. On the contrary, by its union with God's uncreated life its created integrity is restored. This is the decisive meaning of the patristic concept of deification. Deified by virtue of the hypostatic union, brought "into communion with the divine nature", human nature becomes again authentically

76 "Christ's Humanity", 39, 30; cf., "the hypostasis of the Logos was the ultimate 'I', the subject of the authentically human will and freedom of Christ. It is the Logos who 'willed' in a human way" (Ibid., 30).

77 “Christ’s Humanity, 30.

78 This dual emphasis Meyendorff sets over against monophysitism and monotheletism, and "any other unilaterally theocentric doctrines of salvation" ("Christ's Humanity", 30; cf., "New Life", 165), including what Florovsky has called the "anthropological minimalism" of hyper-Alexandrians (Christ, 19).

79 Byzantine Theology, 130-1. Meyendorff sets this Chalcedonian, Maximian, Orthodox position over against Origenism and its more recent idealist manifestations and their propensity for eclipsing "difference and distinction between [God] and His creation" (Ibid., 131).
human. None of its natural characteristics are modified or diminished; rather are they recovered, liberated, so that humanity is brought back to itself in the incarnate existence of the Word.

And yet, this being brought back to itself, this recovered liberty, amounts to a restored orientation not to itself but away from itself to God. The freedom for which the human creature was originally created and to which it is returned in Christ takes it out of itself, abandoning what is natural in order to receive the supernatural grace of the Spirit of God. Self-abandonment, self-transcendence, is original to and constitutive of human nature made in God’s image; it is not merely required because of the Fall. Indeed, this natural human kenosis corresponds to the essentially kenotic character of God.

It is this free and natural self-abandonment for the sake of union with God that constitutes the animated and not merely passive human activity of Christ. Created in God’s image, and oriented towards participation in the very life of God, the human

\[\text{80 Christ, 86.}\]

\[\text{81 Christ, 21, 189; cf., 79, 86, 164; also, Byzantine Theology, 40.}\]

\[\text{82 "Because man is made in the image of the transcendent God, his very nature allows him to 'go beyond' himself and communicate with his Archetype" (Christ, 150; cf., 115). Meyendorff is paraphrasing Maximus' "doctrine of ecstasy (ekstasis)"; "to be united with God of whom he is the image, man must 'freely go out of himself' (egchôrēsis gnômikē) and abandon what is really or intelligibly natural to him and receive in this way the sovereign grace of the Spirit" (Ibid., 150; quoting Ambigua [PG 91, col. 1076bc]).}\]

\[\text{83 "The human ecstasy corresponds to an act of God, who also comes out of his transcendent essence to meet the creature. The meeting of the two movements was fully and hypostatically accomplished in the incarnate Word ..." (Christ, 151).}\]

\[\text{84 Meyendorff affirms the active and not merely passive humanity of Christ on the authority especially of "the greatest Byzantine theologian of the early Middle Ages, St. Maximus the Confessor" who "insists on the point that Christ's humanity was not a passive instrument of Divinity, but that it exercised in time a true human freedom. Human freedom indeed belonged to Christ, though a wrong choice was unthinkable in Him. His was a mystery of the hypostatic union, irreducible to human psychology" ("Christ's humanity", 29).}\]
creature is by nature ordered and called to be active in bringing to fulfillment her own God-given destiny.\textsuperscript{85} Distracted and perverted by the Fall, in Christ human nature is restored to its properly collaborative activity, fulfilling in itself in a redeemed new way the image of God in which it was made.\textsuperscript{86}

Meyendorff variously describes this properly human activity as collaboration, cooperation, synergy, free participation, human effort and development, and obedience. He repeatedly rejects those accounts which insist upon a purely passive or merely receptive role for the human nature and will of Christ.\textsuperscript{87} Possessed of a human body, mind, and soul Christ exercised the creative, improvisatory, responsible functions proper to the human creature.\textsuperscript{88} This properly human existence and activity was an "existential reality" for Christ.\textsuperscript{89}

Following the lead of Maximus, Meyendorff looks specifically to the Gospel accounts of Christ's baptism and agony in Gethsemane as illustrative of the authentically human life of the incarnate Son. His baptism included "his human experience of a 'new birth' at the conclusion of his human maturing and at the

\textsuperscript{85} "[T]he patristic view of man as being created in order to share in God's life, in order to be active in accordance with his own destiny as determined by God, excludes the purely passive role of man in his own salvation" \textit{(Catholicity, 75)}.

\textsuperscript{86} "In Christ, our will is active, but in a redeemed, new manner; it does not only 'receive', it acts ...; our will acts in Christ in order to fulfil in itself the image of the Creator which was obscured by the Fall but which has been restored in Jesus to its former beauty" \textit{(Catholicity, 75-6)}. "Communion [with God] always implies cooperation (or 'synergy') between the divine gift and human free acceptance and effort. Such cooperation was fully achieved in the hypostatic union between the divine and human wills of Jesus Christ" \textit{"Confessing Christ", 117}.

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Christ}, 79, 86, 160; \textit{Byzantine Theology}, 40, 133, 153; \textit{Catholicity}, 75; "Humanity", 63; "New Life", 165.

\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Byzantine Theology}, 153.

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Christ}, 79.
beginning of his messianic ministry".\textsuperscript{\textit{90}} In the unfolding synergy of the divine and human wills his baptism marked the moment of transition from his long and hidden process of "human maturing" into his public, "messianic ministry".\textsuperscript{\textit{91}} It is surpassed only by Gethsemane in the vividness with which it conveys the fact that the synergy of wills was experienced by Jesus as his humanly free and active cooperation with the will of God the Father – “[his] human acceptance of the will of the Father for the salvation of the world”.\textsuperscript{\textit{92}}

These descriptions of the human activity of Christ are summed up in the biblical term, obedience. The incarnate Son was obedient to the end, and in that obedience revealed the power and glory of God, fully manifest in his resurrection. His obedience included his willingly "remain[ing] human", refusing to resort to the exercise of divine power, even at the prospect of his own death.\textsuperscript{\textit{93}} As obedience, the human activity of Christ is not reducible to pure passivity and mere receptiveness. Equally, its real effort and exertion is not independent and self-determined. Christ's authentically human exertion cooperates with the divine action in a spirit of dependent acceptance, willingly ordered in terms of it.\textsuperscript{\textit{94}}

That is why an uncompromising insistence upon the authentically human activity of Christ brings greater glory, not to the human creature, but to God. The

\textsuperscript{\textit{90}} "New Life", 165.


\textsuperscript{\textit{92}} "New Life", 165; cf., "Christ's Humanity", 20. Meyendorff doubts that Barth's suspiciously "modalistic" trinitarianism, "'one personal God in three modes of being', does justice to the biblical accounts of Jesus the Son and His relations with Abba, his Father" ("Reply", 184).

\textsuperscript{\textit{93}} "Humanity", 63.

\textsuperscript{\textit{94}} "Only God can be the Savior; he himself is the Author of salvation: flesh can but accept and cooperate with the divine action" (\textit{Christ}, 156; cf., 157; also, "Humanity", 63).
human obedience of Christ manifests the truth about humanity, that we are originally created, and in Christ redeemed, for willing communion with God. Yet, it is God, the Son of God, who is the single agent of that human obedience. It is he, and not we ourselves, who exerted himself humanly to win a human battle. He, the divine Logos, remained humanly faithful, humanly obedient, even unto death. Accordingly, his human victory, confirmed and made manifest by his resurrection, redounds to God's glory. Indeed, it is the persistently human activity of the incarnate Son of God that is precisely and most consummately God's self-revelation, wherein he reconciles the world to himself, making himself accessible to us.

Salvation is God's prerogative and salvation "depends upon our will". The sole agent of our salvation is the Son of God; he accomplishes our salvation by his human obedience unto death. The actor is divine; the deed is human. Meyendorff knows that to Western readers this sounds like Pelagianism, and addresses the charge on more than one occasion. He has spoken of the created autonomy of humanity, in order to distinguish himself from all forms of idealism with their inevitably monistic tendencies, blurring the real distinction between creator and creature. Creation, and more especially the human creature, is essentially other than the Creator, carrying within itself its God-given meaning and purpose, and loved by God for its own sake.

For all that, creation is not "ontologically autonomous". Ontological autonomy characterises Western anthropologies and cosmologies, with their inability to

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95 "This is why we do not speak of a divinized man, but of a God who became flesh" (Christ, 156, quoting, John of Damascus, De fide orthodoxa, III, 2, col. 988a).

96 "Humanity", 63.

97 Byzantine Theology, 152.

98 Christ, 150.

99 Byzantine Theology, 134.
appreciate the inherently theocentric character of human nature. In the West, especially in the Augustinian tradition, human beings are said to have been created autonomously perfect and immortal. Grace is a “donum superadditum”, a “created gift” added to this natural condition.\textsuperscript{100} Nature and grace are separate and static realities.\textsuperscript{101} After the Fall the gulf between them is increased. But it is the gift of grace that helps human beings to recover and develop their "natural capability to know God".\textsuperscript{102} Or (in the medieval revision of Augustinian epistemology) it is grace that grants direct knowledge of God through revelation – Scripture or the Church's Tradition – and created grace that generates a meritorious activity of the human free will rendering human sainthood possible. In the further revision of the Protestant Reformation, while the gulf between grace and nature is maintained, the deposit of divine revelation is restricted to Scripture, and the capacity for meritorious activity through created grace is rejected "as an idolatrous corruption of Christianity" (69). God is God, and human beings are sinners. "In order to justify man, God does not need man's cooperation" (69). Rather, the activity of God's grace renders the human creature fittingly, receptively passive. "God speaks, man listens; God forgives, man receives forgiveness through faith" (69-70).

The problem for Meyendorff in all of this is the determinative gulf between grace and nature. There is no such gulf. Rather there is an original, redeemed, and eschatological synergy between them. Grace is not added to a natural capacity, nor is it a created gift or habitus, nor does it stand over against nature evoking a merely passive

\textsuperscript{100} Catholicity, 71. The rest of this paragraph is a sharply reduced paraphrase of Meyendorff's most extended account of the history of Western theology (Ibid., 66-70).

\textsuperscript{101} "Creation", 34; "New Life", 157.

\textsuperscript{102} Catholicity, 66; all quotations in the rest of this paragraph are from Catholicity, 66-70, exact page references included in the body of the text.
receptiveness. As the very life and love of the triune God that creates and redeems us for participation in the divine communion, grace elicits our free and active pursuit of that tendency towards God that is our natural dynamic.

In this connection, Meyendorff likes to quote Irenaeus’ definition of the human creature as body, soul, and Holy Spirit. He knows that later writers, justifiably nervous of Origenistic and Evagrian extremes, prefer to designate this third element nous. Yet, they agree with Irenaeus that the image of God, which both Spirit and nous serve to indicate, is "not an external imprint, received by man in the beginning and preserved by human nature as its own property independently of its relationships with God". Rather, it designates an original participation in the life of God, a being essentially in relationship to God, so that true humanness presupposes the original and ongoing life of the human creature in that relationship.

The grace of the hypostatic union is the restoration of humanity to the life of God. Human nature is liberated, recovering its freedom of will by virtue of the Son of God's assuming it to himself. So, the cooperative activity, the human effort and freedom of human nature in Jesus Christ is brought about by its being united to the Son of God. It does not in any sense contribute to, merit, or achieve that union. The redemptive union of God and the human in Jesus Christ is not the result of a

103 Palamas, 163-4; Byzantine Theology, 2; "Creation", 34; specifically, "there is no 'created grace'" (Christ, 205; cf., Catholicity, 71); "the notion of created grace is completely foreign to Greek patristics" (Christ, 79).


105 Byzantine Theology, 138; "Christian Dogma", 87; Catholicity, 21-4; "Humanity", 60.

106 Christ, 114.

107 “Creation”, 34-36; Christ, 107, 204; “Christian Dogma”, 87.
cooperation between grace and free will; rather is human freedom the fruit of the union.\textsuperscript{108}

No treatment of Christ’s authentically human activity can avoid the question of the fallenness or not of the human nature assumed by the Son. Meyendorff is clear that though the incarnate Son lived his life without sin, yet his humanity was fallen in exactly the same sense as Adam's and his descendents. So complete is the Son of God's identification with fallen human nature that he can be spoken of as coming from that fallen state to work our salvation.\textsuperscript{109}

The hallmark of fallen human existence is fear, the fear of death that manifests itself as "an instinct of self-preservation" – at all costs.\textsuperscript{110} Created to live within the limits set by our proper dependence upon our earthly needs, our fear of death and deprivation supplants grateful dependence with an insatiable craving for more and more food, power, security, sexual fulfillment.\textsuperscript{111} Deceived and self-deceived we withdraw from our natural communion with God and our human neighbours, our

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Christ}, 124. Meyendorff takes over from Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius the term, "synergy" to name this communion, and hastens to explain that it is not "the blasphemous juxtaposition of divine grace and human effort but the concrete realization in Jesus Christ of man's primitive image". Only the refusal to recognise the priority of this communion could permit Western critics (most famously among the ancients, Cassian) to tax this synergism with being semi-Pelagian: "the judgment was given in connection with categories foreign to Eastern patristic tradition" (Ibid., 124).

The insufficiency of the otherwise laudable "anthropological maximalism' (in the words of G. Florovsky)" of the ancient Antiochene lay in their insistence upon Christ's human nature preserving even after its union with the Word a certain autonomy, maintaining "up to a point its free will", and pursuing an "independent development and activity (yet in union with the Word); and to this human nature the Antiochenes attributed the merit of our salvation. The man Jesus, according to Theodore, 'enjoys the cooperation of the Word in proportion with his determination (toward the good)'. From such an interpretation of salvation, one may easily draw conclusions favorable to a humanist asceticism that sees man's salvation in his own effort toward good and virtue as an imitation of the effort accomplished by Jesus" (Ibid., 17).

\textsuperscript{109} "Christ's Humanity", 23.

\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Byzantine Theology}, 162; cf., "Humanity", 64-5.

\textsuperscript{111} "Christ's Humanity", 34; cf., "Humanity", 65.
conduct marked by "self-affirmation, self-isolation, self-defensiveness." Flailing about "blindly in darkness" we are caught in an agony of uncertainty and hesitation in all our opinions and decisions.113

The redemption of the world is uniquely the work of the one who made our fallen humanity his own. Redemption is not achieved immediately, at the moment of the Word's conception in the Virgin's womb. The gospel tells not of a theophany but of an incarnation. Human nature did not "cease to be what we are as soon as divinity touched it".114 The transition from the “old” humanity to the “new” was accomplished through the whole course of Christ's life of obedience unto death.115 He was made perfect through what he suffered. Perfected human nature was fully manifest only at his resurrection.116

His suffering included all the necessities provoked by Adam's disobedience.117 He existed in “fallen time”, living from conception to grave under death's shadow, the whole of life uninterruptedly determined by death as an all-pervasive reality.118 As it is our "existential reality", so was it his. He was mortal, limited, and perishing – in

112 “Christ's Humanity”, 22.


114 “Christ's Humanity”, 28; cf., 23, 24; also, Byzantine Theology, 49, 157.

115 “Humanity”, 63.


117 Christ, 164-5; Byzantine Theology, 49.

118 “Christ's Humanity”, 26, 28; Christ, 166-7.
patristic terminology, corruptible. His falleness evoked from him – in body, heart, mind, and soul – a kaleidoscope of responses: "Hunger, thirst, fear, suffering, death and corruption became truly His".

Meyendorff, as we have seen, dismisses all attempts at psychological analysis of Jesus. The Gospels do not discuss such matters. They do offer narrative descriptions of "several crucial moments" in the life and ministry of Christ which confirm that he felt, lacked knowledge, agonized, and died in common with all of fallen humanity. His very real anguish in the face of death is epitomised and affirmed in Gethsemane.

The ignorance of Christ is particularly controversial, even though on several occasions Jesus himself professes to a lack of knowledge on certain matters, matters about which we too are ignorant. Too many Byzantine authors lose their nerve at this point. At best, the hypostatic union is taken to have modified human nature through the communicatio idiomatum; more commonly, Christ is described as pretending ignorance as a pedagogical device to emphasise his humanness and display his condescension. In common with Nicephorus and also Cyril of Alexandria, Meyendorff sets himself "in opposition to that tradition at this point" and insists that the completeness of Christ's identification with us required that he partake of our creaturely and fallen ignorance.

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119 "New Life" 158; Christ, 87-9.

120 "Christ's Humanity", 28-9. Meyendorff quotes with approval Lossky's words: "He unites to the integral fullness of His divine nature the unfullness no less integral to fallen human nature" (Ibid., 26, quoting, Vladimir Lossky, Orthodox Theology: An Introduction [Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1978], 106; the italics are Meyendorff’s). Meyendorff is nevertheless critical of Lossky for what he calls his "reductionism of the human 'fallen' reality in Jesus"; he levels the same charge against Florovsky and Barth ("Christ's Humanity", 25).

121 "Christ's Humanity", 26.

122 Byzantine Theology, 49, 157.

123 Byzantine Theology, 49; cf., Christ, 87, 89.
Of particular importance for my task but also of primary significance for Meyendorff in presenting a dogmatic description of Christ’s human activity, is the provision of a sufficient account of the willingness, the freedom of Christ in his accomplishing the world’s salvation. In what sense was Christ willingly ignorant, fearful, limited, and so on? At issue is the relation between Christ’s divine and human freedom.

Salvation is uniquely God's prerogative. Yet it is God's will that he should not keep it to himself, but that humanity should participate in the saving deed. God has not overruled but co-opted the agency of the creature. "After man had been vanquished, God allowed him who had been enslaved to death by sin to vanquish the tyrant ...: he gives him victory again and saves the same by the same (tô homoiô to homoion) ...". God remains the sole agent: he co-opts, he gives victory, he saves. But he co-opts, gives victory to, and saves by human agency. The incarnate Word wills and enacts the saving purpose of God humanly. This calls for further explanation.

We have seen that the Word became not just human, but fallen human, subject to all the consequences of Adam's sin, excepting only sin itself. In this connection Meyendorff repeatedly distinguishes his own Eastern, Byzantine understanding of the consequences of Adam’s sin from what he calls the Western, Augustinian interpretation. Whereas in the West the consequences are summarised as "original sin 'of nature'" according to which human nature as such is corrupted so that Adam's heirs

124 God's purpose for humanity was "realized in Christ by a unilateral action of God's love" that is "open to man's response and free effort" (Byzantine Theology, 165); cf., "Creation", 29; "Christ's Humanity", 21; "New Life", 159.

125 Christ, 164.


127 Byzantine Theology, 205.
are by nature guilty sinners, in the East they are "a natural mortality", not Adam's guilt but his loss of immortality, his subjection to death being his legacy.\textsuperscript{128}

Jesus did not assume "a state of sin", but a "condition' of ... human nature"\textsuperscript{129} – liability to death and the pall that it casts over all creaturely existence. Human beings incur guilt by their own sins as they permit their fallen enslavement to death to tempt them away from God. They speak and act not according to nature as God created it, but as determined by their fallen condition. "Sin is always a personal act, never an act of nature".\textsuperscript{130} That is why Jesus could not sin. His person was not hypostatically human but the second hypostasis of the Godhead. Subject at all points to our fallen condition, comprehensively pervaded by the shadow of death, Jesus deliberately and consistently resisted the temptation to allow his words and deeds to be determined by death's power, instead moment by moment from the womb to the grave willingly obeying the will of God.\textsuperscript{131} His willingness, his freedom, is at once divine and human – at once, but not identically. The subtle but profound distinction emerges with some clarity in the

\textsuperscript{128} Christ, 88; “Humanity”, 64; Byzantine Theology, 144-5; “New Life”, 162.

According to Meyendorff, the difference here (between inherited guilt and inherited mortality) reflects the difference between Greek and Latin readings of Rom 5.12. "The Latin version of eph hô pantes hêemarton in Rom 5.12 is in quo omnes peccaverunt. The masculine quo must refer to 'one man', mentioned earlier in the sentence: 'all have sinned in Adam'. The Greek does not allow for such a meaning, and admits two grammatical possibilities: (a) if eph hô is a neuter and means 'because', the sentence defines death as the punishment for individual sins of any human (not 'original' sin); (b) if it is masculine, it refers to 'death' (thanatos), so that death – as cosmic, personalized reality – becomes the cause of individual human sins. It is in this sense that the text was read by Theodoret and Theodore, as well as by many other Greek authors, including Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Maximus the Confessor, and later Byzantine theologians" ("New Life", 162-3 n. 45; cf., at greater length, Byzantine Theology, 144; also, briefly mentioned, Catholicity, 66-7).

\textsuperscript{129} Christ, 88.

\textsuperscript{130} Byzantine Theology, 143; cf., Catholicity, 72.

\textsuperscript{131} Byzantine Theology, 147; "Humanity", 64.
sixth century controversy between John Damascene and the so-called aphthartodocetists, most notably represented by Julian of Halicarnassus.\textsuperscript{132}

Both John and Julian were concerned to affirm the freedom of Christ. The latter however, under the guise of honouring God’s freedom, argued that Jesus possessed an "'incorruptible' (aphthartos)" humanity.\textsuperscript{133} Death and corruption are consequences of human sin and Jesus did not sin. His was an "ideal humanity, free from the consequences of sin".\textsuperscript{134} Occasionally he appeared to suffer human limitation and finally he appeared to die.\textsuperscript{135} In each case, however, he did so as "an individual act of condescension and of the 'economy'", divinely choosing what at each step of the way he could equally have not chosen.\textsuperscript{136} Had he not chosen to die at the moment of his death, he would have lived forever.\textsuperscript{137} The Lord suffered hunger, thirst, tiredness, and death, but in a way different from our own: "'while we suffer them as a natural necessity, Christ ... suffered them freely (êekousios) and he was not subject to the laws of nature'".\textsuperscript{138}

\textsuperscript{132} It is perhaps more accurate to say that Julian was the most articulate of the aphthartodocetists, saving 'most notable' for the Emperor Justinian who, after many years' profession of Chalcedonianism, near the end of his life was persuaded by Julian to aphthartodocetism (cf., \textit{Christ}, 88).

\textsuperscript{133} "New Life", 163.

\textsuperscript{134} \textit{Christ}, 165-6.

\textsuperscript{135} "New Life", 163.

\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Christ}, 166; cf., 87-8.

\textsuperscript{137} "Christ's Humanity", 28.

\textsuperscript{138} "New Life", 163, quoting, John of Damascus, \textit{On the Heresies} 84 (PG 94, 156a); the same is quoted in "Christ's Humanity", 28, n. 34; also in \textit{Christ}, 166.
The Damascene too affirms the voluntary character of Christ’s sufferings and death. But that does not mean as for the aphthartodocetists that Christ was free either from the original laws of the created order or from the additional necessities of fallen nature. Possessed of a human nature consubstantial with and fallen as our own, his freedom with respect to his sufferings cannot mean there was "no inherent necessity" for him to suffer and to die.\textsuperscript{139} Christ exercises his human freedom not in choosing at any moment whether or not to suffer or to die, but by deliberately and consistently obeying the will of God in the midst and under the necessities of fallen creaturely existence.

Nonetheless, the sufferings and death of Christ are properly said to be voluntary in that his incarnate existence as such in all its aspects and dimensions was willed by the triune God – willed originally, eternally, and at every step of the way. The sovereign and saving purpose of God entails the Son’s becoming subject at all points to the necessities of fallen nature including human corruptibility – suffering and death, in order that he might free himself and us from them – from within.\textsuperscript{140}

Humanity was restored and redeemed \textit{in his person} by virtue of his human obedience to God, including his humanly deliberate overcoming myriad temptations to order his life not according to God’s will but in terms of the fear engendered by his limitations, ignorance, suffering, and all other aspects of his and our mortality.\textsuperscript{141} His humanity was not a merely passive instrument in the hands of his divinity, but was itself active in the process of its own salvation. Exercising in time authentic human freedom, the Son of God humanly willed from moment to moment to order the whole course and conduct of his life in accord with the will of God.

\textsuperscript{139} “Christ’s Humanity”, 28; cf., ”The Cross was not an alternative which the Logos chose in the course of His earthly life, but which He could have avoided, stopping His ‘economy’ half-way” (Ibid., 27).

\textsuperscript{140} \textit{Christ}, 167; “Christ’s Humanity”, 27.

\textsuperscript{141} “The Christian Gospel tells us that this change happened precisely \textit{in the person of Christ}” ("Christ’s Humanity", 27, italics original).
Meyendorff calls this Christ’s "paschal" humanity and the "paschal mystery" of his humanity: he is the new paschal lamb who in his own person has brought God’s people out of their Egyptian bondage to mortality into the freedom of the promised land.\footnote{142}

The Kenosis of the Son

Thus far I have for the most part restricted myself to the outstanding and distinctive features of Meyendorff’s exposition of three classical christological affirmations, namely, (i) the fullness of Christ’s deity, (ii) the fullness of his humanity, and (iii) the unity of his person as the Son of God incarnate. It remains to account for their coincidence in Jesus Christ, coincidence and not mere juxtaposition – and without any one of them being subsumed or otherwise compromised.\footnote{143}

That they are coincident in Christ is a theological datum entailed by the gospel as it is lived by the saints, rehearsed and celebrated in the church’s liturgy, lectionary, iconography, and hymnography, and articulated in the trinitarian and christological definitions of the ecumenical creeds and councils.\footnote{144} The evangelical facts that testify to their coincidence may be briefly stated: God the Son, and not God the Father, God the Spirit, or the divine nature as such, became flesh, took humanity to himself, and

\footnote{142} “Christ’s Humanity”, 27, 29.

\footnote{143} “The basic soteriological intuition of Cyril – the personal unity of the incarnate Logos – and the need to distinguish between the divine and human natures had to be fully acknowledged together”; Meyendorff credits "what is (perhaps inadequately) termed Byzantine neo-Chalcedonianism" with having "gradually developed" this dogmatic coincidence ("New Life", 160).

\footnote{144} Byzantine Theology, 6-11, 29-30; Catholicity, 33.
suffered and died for the salvation of the world. 145 Meyendorff further expounds this in terms of the kenosis of the Son and the non-competitive relation of creator and creature, redeemer and redeemed.

His exposition answers these questions. How is it that the two-fold affirmation of Christ's divine and human agencies does not tear him apart as personal agent, rendering meaningless the acknowledgment that he is one and the same agent in all his activity? How does one account for the unity of Christ's person – that he is always one and the same agent and actor – without threatening the integrity either of his divine or of his human agency and activity? How is one to reconcile without compromise the divine and human freedom of the one personal subject that is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God? In passing we may note that Meyendorff proposes to offer not a priori speculative conditions of possibility for the incarnation but a sufficient (though not exhaustive) contemporary exposition of the biblical testimony to the gospel once for all revealed and accomplished in Jesus Christ. 146

Kenosis primarily describes that act of condescension peculiar to God the Son (as distinguished from the Father, the Spirit, and deity as such) in which he willingly became incarnate, suffered, and died on the cross. 147 The peculiarity of that act

145 "Tradition", 13; Byzantine Theology, 47; "Reply", 188; "Christ's Humanity", 17.

146 Meyendorff admires Leo for his biblical realism: his "intention was not to speculate about the very meaning of the union of the two natures in Christ but to reintroduce the common sense of the Bible, in which Jesus appeared clearly as both God and man" (Christ, 24-5).

In the East, "[b]y far the greatest part of the theological literature is either exegetical or polemical, and in both cases the Christian faith is assumed as a given reality, upon which one comments, or which one defends, but which one does not try to formulate exhaustively" (Byzantine Theology, 4). Meyendorff applauds Chalcedon for its "truly Catholic moderation and humility" whereby (particularly in the four negative adverbs) it "excluded any pretention ['amid the intricacies and the phraseological subtleties'] to explain fully in human terms the very mystery of the incarnation" (Christ, 28).

In sum, "[i]n Jesus Christ ... the fullness of Truth was revealed once and for all" (Byzantine Theology, 9). "The essential meaning of the New Testament supposes that Christ's redemptive act has been completed once and for all, that nothing can be added to it, and that there is no other way of benefiting from it but by hearing the word of God proclaimed by the 'witnesses’" ("Tradition", 13).

147 Meyendorff acknowledges a "kenotic" activity peculiar to the Holy Spirit – exercised by the Spirit "in the internal life of the Trinity" and in the economy of salvation (Catholicity, 25; cf., Byzantine Theology, 168-9; also, "New Life", 168). The Spirit's role is kenotic in that "it is always directed to the Other"
requires that a critical distinction is acknowledged and maintained between person and nature, more specifically, between the second hypostasis of the Godhead which was made flesh and the divine nature which was not.\textsuperscript{148} When that distinction has been ignored, various christological heresies – ancient and modern reductions and/or

\textit{(Catholicity, 25). In the immanent life of God, the Spirit is “the mysterious love of the Father towards the Word” and of “the Word ... towards Him who begets Him” (Ibid., 19, quoting Gregory Palamas, Physical Chapters 36 [PG 151, col. 1144d-1145a]; Meyendorff notes the similarity between Palamas and Augustine); cf., “In the Holy Trinity, the Spirit unites and connects the Father and the Son” (Ibid., 20). In creation, salvation, and the life of the Church the Spirit “never calls to Himself but to the Son, the Godman” (Ibid., 25). He “manifest[s] the kingship of the Logos in creation and in salvation history” (\textit{Byzantine Theology}, 169). He “came upon Mary” for the sake of the Son’s incarnation (\textit{Catholicity, 25}; cf., “... the Spirit, through whom the Incarnation was realized” [“Tradition”, 15]). He “makes Christ eschatologically present” within the church (\textit{Catholicity, 25}). This is the force of the notion “found in the Fathers, and in the liturgical texts, of the Spirit as image of the Son” ['see for example Basil, \textit{De Spirit. S., 9, 23, PG 32:109a}” (\textit{Byzantine Theology}, 171, 179 n. 10), which must not be taken to imply that “the personal, hypostatic functions of the Son and of the Spirit are ... identical” (Ibid., 173).}

\textsuperscript{148} “The Logos – willingly of course – underwent change, ‘emptying Himself (ekenôsen heauton) and assuming the form of a servant’ (Phil 2.7), whereas His divine nature preserved all its transcendent and unchangeable characteristics” (“Christ’s Humanity”, 14; cf., “Reply”, 188; \textit{Christ, 28}, 44-5, 71-2). Meyendorff credits “Western Christology” and especially “Pope Leo’s famous Tome to Flavian” for providing the “terminological innovation” required to articulate that difference and its implications (\textit{Christ, 24}; cf., \textit{Byzantine Theology, 33}).

Other pairs of terms that Meyendorff uses to name the difference between hypostasis and nature include: “existence”/“essence” (Christ’s Humanity”, 16); “the ‘who’”/“the ‘what’” (\textit{Christ, 76}); “unique subject”, “ego”, and “agent”/“mode of existence” (“Tradition”, 18; \textit{Byzantine Theology, 182}; \textit{Christ, 85, 170}); “source and foundation”/“content” (\textit{Christ, 85}).

He expresses doubts about the usefulness of the Platonic and Aristotelian pairs, “particular”/“universal”, “concrete”/“abstract”, person and nature “both being at the same time concrete and really distinct” (\textit{Christ, 77}). He is equally critical of Leontius of Byzantium’s definition of hypostasis as “existence ‘by itself’” which “transform[s] the Trinity into three gods” (Ibid., 76). And he expresses strong reservations about the Thomist characterisation of the divine hypostases as “but ‘relations’ within the divine essence”; if they are mere relations, “the theopaschite position of Cyril must necessarily be interpreted as implying the passion of the divine nature itself; and, to explain the passion without using theopaschism, one then tends to admit in Christ, as did Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius, a human ‘ego’, subject of the passion and generally of the whole human experience of the incarnate Word” (Ibid., 76-7; cf., \textit{Byzantine Theology, 94}).
contradictions of the gospel – have arisen.\textsuperscript{149} Typically, they are some version of monistic pantheism,\textsuperscript{150} or some variation on modalist patripassianism.\textsuperscript{151}

Against all such reductions Meyendorff insists upon a "necessarily ontological" distinction between hypostasis and nature,\textsuperscript{152} in order to render in dogmatic terms the facts of the incarnation, specifically, that the Son became flesh and died, "alone departing from the essential unchangeability and incorruptibility of the divine nature".\textsuperscript{153} Yet too, Meyendorff argues for a complementary understanding of the relation between hypostasis and nature. "Nature' is what the divine persons are\textsuperscript{154}", but not "at the expense of other strong patristic affirmations" of the persons "possessing nature", each indeed possessing it fully.\textsuperscript{155} The critical point in all of this is that the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{149} "Christ's Humanity", 14, 16-17; Christ, 22; "New Life", 156.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{150} "Reply", 187; cf., Catholicity, 19; also, "Creation", 30; "New Life", 153.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{151} "Christ's Humanity", 14, 16; Catholicity, 18-19; "Reply", 186.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{152} "Christ's Humanity" 14; cf., Palamas, 215f.}

Looking back to the Cappadocian refinement of the terminological distinction between hypostasis and ousia with respect to the Trinity, Meyendorff observes: "There is no claim here for philosophical consistency, although an effort is made to use current philosophical terms. The ultimate meaning of the terms, however, is clearly different from their meaning in Greek philosophy, and their inadequacy is frankly recognized" (Byzantine Theology, 182; "Christ's Humanity" 17).

Meyendorff takes note of Lossky's and Florovsky's affirmation and development of this same distinction ("Christ's Humanity", 17 n. 18; "Creation", 37).

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{153} "Christ's Humanity" 17; cf., "New Life", 160.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{154} "Christ's Humanity", 17; he continues: "... the Father possesses it in Himself, while the Son and the Spirit receive it from the Father" (Ibid., 17; cf., Byzantine Theology, 182).}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{155} "Christ's Humanity", 13.}
persons are not products of nature, but that in which nature exists and as such "the very principle of its existence". ¹⁵⁶

The facts of the incarnation and the essential distinction between person and nature that they imply mean that "the persons [are] open to assume reality outside of nature". ¹⁵⁷ The openness applies to all the persons of the Godhead. ¹⁵⁸ But, the incarnation, the assumption of human nature, is unique to the Son. ¹⁵⁹

It must be emphasised that the hypostatic openness to assume reality outside of nature does not imply a departure from or giving up of the original nature. ¹⁶⁰ The Son of God does not cease to be God or leave his deity behind in assuming human nature, even though human nature is outside of and absolutely different from deity. ¹⁶¹ In fact, the Son preserves the divine nature even as he goes beyond it to make human nature his own. ¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶ *Christ*, 77. Meyendorff thinks that Moltmann's otherwise extremely helpful *The Unity of the Triune God*, "requires clarification and development" in just these terms: "the divine persons are not simply the 'modes of being' of the divine nature. They 'possess' divine nature, which is one and undivided. It is inaccurate to say, as Moltmann does, that they 'are real subjects with wills and intellects'; they indeed possess only one will and one divine intelligence, (in virtue of their one nature) ..." ("Reply", 187).

¹⁵⁷ "Reply", 188; cf., *Christ*, 77.

¹⁵⁸ "Reply", 188.

¹⁵⁹ "Reply", 188; cf., *Palamas*, 184.


¹⁶¹ Provocatively Meyendorff writes, "What this implies is that the characteristics of the divine essence – impassability, immutability, etc. – are not absolutely binding upon the personal, or hypostatic, existence of God" (*Byzantine Theology*, 155-6).

¹⁶² "Reply", 188.
The ontological distinction between person and nature means furthermore that persons are "capable of real change (although their nature remains changeless)".\textsuperscript{163} Before commenting further on this personal capacity for change, the matter of the changelessness of nature calls for clarification.\textsuperscript{164} In regard to Jesus Christ, nature's changelessness means most basically that his deity and humanity retain their inalienably proper characteristics.\textsuperscript{165} Otherwise, they would \textit{per definitionem} cease to be what they are. This is the force of the four Chalcedonian adverbs as over against the infamous \textit{tertium quid}. The unity of the two natures in Christ is absolute and indissoluble not through any alteration in either nature but entirely by virtue of the Son's hypostatic identity. The union is personal, accomplished in and by the hypostasis of the Son.

But, in another sense it is the divine nature alone that is unchangeable, impassable, incorruptible – in Western scholastic terms, \textit{actus purus}, whereas human nature is inherently subject to growth and change,\textsuperscript{166} a proper dynamism that, as we have seen, has been diverted from its true purpose by sin. Jesus Christ did not sin, but he grew and changed naturally, according to the created dynamic of his (and our) humanity.

It is the capacity for real, existential change peculiar to hypostasis that accounts for the kenosis of the Son in becoming what he was not before – passable and corruptible flesh – and at the furthest depths of his kenosis dying on a cross and being

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{163 "Reply", 188.}
\footnote{164 "Christ's Humanity", 18.}
\footnote{165 \textit{Byzantine Theology}, 34; “Creation”, 28.}
\footnote{166 As implied by the comparison with the Western concept of God as \textit{actus purus}, the changelessness and impassability of God cannot mean that God's being is static. Far from it, "He is an acting, living God", not the philosophers' "static idea of the supreme good" (\textit{Catholicity}, 71-2).}
\end{footnotes}
buried in a tomb, without compromise to his impassable deity.\textsuperscript{167} It is the hypostatic dimension of the Son's existence that accounts for his remaining one and the same in time and eternity, while also himself becoming subject to change.\textsuperscript{168} Meyendorff describes it as the "peculiar double character of the specifically personal existence" of the Son: "continuous identity and openness to existential change".\textsuperscript{169}

Accordingly, the church may and indeed must confess that, while the divine nature (which is always, without interruption, the Son's own nature) was "necessarily immune to ... all the changing experiences natural to humanity in the 'fallen' world", the Son of God underwent change. He, the divine Logos, was born, grew, was tempted, suffered, and died even as his divine nature preserved all its transcendent, changeless, and impassable characteristics.\textsuperscript{170} His humanity in all its subjection to growth, change, and corruptibility became with his incarnation no less his own than his deity.\textsuperscript{171} In sum, "the hypostasis of the Son opened itself to creation and appropriated humanity, making it to be the 'humanity of God'".\textsuperscript{172}

But equally, because he is God incarnate, his so human existence unto death is itself God's gift of God's very self, "Emmanuel – 'God with us'".\textsuperscript{173} This is why it is so

\textsuperscript{167} \textit{Christ}, 210; cf., "Reply", 188; also, "Christ's Humanity", 14.

\textsuperscript{168} In Meyendorff's provocative terms: "This 'openness' of a hypostatic or personal God to the creature [in context, he is speaking specifically about 'the Logos ... assuming humanity hypostatically'] implies that the creature, and especially man, is a reality, even in respect to God, since, in a sense, it 'modifies' God's personal existence" (\textit{Christ}, 210).

\textsuperscript{169} "Christ's Humanity", 13, italics original.

\textsuperscript{170} "Christ's Humanity", 13-14.

\textsuperscript{171} \textit{Christ}, 25, 77; "New Life", 159.

\textsuperscript{172} "New Life", 161.
important to insist upon the Son's preserving his deity even as he goes beyond it in his incarnation. Nor is his deity merely partial: "the whole fullness of God was pleased to dwell in Christ bodily" (Col.1.19; 2.9).\footnote{Palamas, 182, 216.}

What does this mean for the will, the divine and human freedom and agency of Christ? The will of God which is one, a function of the divine nature and therefore possessed in common by Father, Son, and Spirit, is neither changed nor left behind by the Son in his becoming flesh. Rather, the incarnation is the enactment and consummate fulfillment of the will of God. It is, at God's initiative, God's saving deed.\footnote{"The death of 'One of the Holy Trinity in the flesh' was a voluntary act, a voluntary assumption by God of the entire dimension of human tragedy" (Byzantine Theology, 160; cf., "New Life", 159).} In becoming flesh, suffering, and dying the Son willingly and freely enacts God's good purpose.\footnote{Palamas, 158; cf., Byzantine Theology, 49.}

At the same time, in going beyond his divine nature and taking humanity to himself, he takes to himself the distinctive dynamic of human nature that makes for uniquely human freedom, willingness, intention, purpose, and act.\footnote{Byzantine Theology, 49.} The willingness and freedom, the activity and agency of Jesus Christ are authentically human even as the "source and foundation", the "ego", the "agent" of that consistently human activity

\footnote{\textit{New Life}, 158. Meyendorff honours Cyril of Alexandria for basing his christology "on the notion of a self-giving God" thereby "affirm[ing] that God alone is the Saviour, entirely upon his personal action and initiative (although it does imply a free human response)" (Ibid., 158-9). In this respect, "actually, an interesting parallelism can be established between the christology of Cyril and the neo-orthodox thought of Karl Barth ('at least the 'early' Barth – the author of the \textit{Römerbrief} and of the earlier parts of the \textit{Dogmatik}')" (Ibid., 159 n. 37).}
is God, the Son of God. As his deity is not left behind in his becoming flesh, so his distinctively human mode of existence is not absorbed by his deity.

The life of the incarnate Son from womb to grave is a human life in which, under the shadow of death and subject to temptation at all points as we are, he in the power of the Holy Spirit is freely, willingly obedient as a man to the Father, conforming his human life in all its human dimensions to the Father's will. That he is obedient to the Father in an authentically and distinctively human manner is as already stated itself the will of the triune God – possessed in common by the incarnate Son with the Father and the Spirit. There is no proper sense in which Jesus may be imagined to have bounded back and forth between moments in which he was humanly willing and active, and others in which he was divinely so. An unconfused but also unbroken consistency and conformity in his divine and human will and activity is the only appropriate (evangelically consistent) dogmatic description of the agency of Jesus Christ.

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178 Christ, 85, 170.


180 “The Holy Spirit is active wherever humanity exercises its God-given freedom – e.g., ... as Jesus through his human will accepts the messianic ministry at the river Jordan ...” ("New Life", 167-8; cf., "Tradition", 15; "Reply", 188; Catholicity, 21-4; "Christian Dogma", 87; Byzantine Theology, 169; "Humanity", 60).

181 Byzantine Theology, 38.

182 Byzantine Theology, 160; "Christ's Humanity", 30; Christ, 146, 150-1.

183 This is Meyendorff's critical characterization of John Knox's version (in The Humanity and Divinity of Christ [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967]) of the kenosis: "His [Christ's] person is ... imagined as containing constantly shifting levels of divinity and humanity, depending upon his acting, either as God or as man" ("New Life", 156).
Such are some of the concrete implications of the peculiar double character of the personal, hypostatic dimension of Christ's existence. Meyendorff distinguishes his version of the Son's kenosis from that of "the so-called 'kenotic' theories of the Incarnation promoted by some Lutherans and Anglicans, and also in Russia by M. Tareev and Sergius Bulgakov".\footnote{184} His self-differentiation here is important because it averts a potential misunderstanding occasioned by his insistence on the ontological distinction between person and nature, namely, that the triune God, God himself, is not quite directly or immediately engaged in the passion of Jesus Christ. That is exactly the accusation to which the various kenotic theorists of the past two centuries are liable. According to them, Christ must have deliberately emptied himself, taken leave of his deity so that he could "in some way be said to be 'only human'" especially in the depths of his agony and death.\footnote{185} His kenosis happened \textit{in spite of} his deity which had to be gotten out of the way for his humiliation and death to take place.

But that is not the message of the gospel, nor is it the kenosis described by St. Paul in Philippians 2.\footnote{186} That kenosis, far from concealing, manifests the glory of God because its subject is none other than God, the Son of God. The kenotic activity of the incarnate Son "manifests the divine being itself in a hypostatic 'openness' to creation and in its assumption – again on the hypostatic, personal level – of corruptibility and death, which are utterly foreign to divine nature".\footnote{187} The Son of God who is indissolubly and essentially God became indissolubly and essentially human, living,

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\footnote{184} "Christ's Humanity", 14-15; cf., "New Life", 156. Meyendorff tempers his criticism, acknowledging the kenoticists' legitimate emphasis on "the theme of Christ's humiliation with its important moral implications" ("Christ's Humanity", 15).

\footnote{185} "Christ's Humanity", 15; cf., "New Life", 156.

\footnote{186} The kenoticists are guilty of an arbitrary use of Philippians 2, interpreting it according to specific philosophical presuppositions ("New Life", 156).

\footnote{187} "Christ's Humanity", 15.
suffering, and dying, all without compromise to the fullness either of his deity or his humanity, without passing back and forth between them, and without absorbing either into the other.

The kenotic act of the Son of God, supremely in his passion and death, reveals the very and transcendent being of God precisely in a personal openness to fallen creaturely existence as having become God's own existence. More specifically, the distinctively human freedom, willingness, and activity unto death of the incarnate Son of God does not happen in spite of or by concealing, but in direct fulfillment of and conformity with, and therefore in the open manifestation of, the transcendent will and purpose of the triune God to save the world in precisely this authentically and therefore redemptively human way.

Indeed, "the infinite love and power of God – which belonged to the Logos in proper from all eternity and which never left Him – was needed to accomplish that salvation in that way". That is why we may and must say that the deity of the Son far from qualifying his humanity is itself the reason why he is authentically, perfectly human. That in turn is why the life of Christ, and especially his passion, manifests rather than conceals the glory of God. If it is the case that it is not until Pentecost that human beings are set free to see and know the incarnation and death of Christ as God's ...

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188 “… the transcendence of God is not a prison in which He is secluded …” (Catholicity, 72).

189 Meyendorff is at pains to demonstrate the unanimity of the tradition (in both the East and the West) on this point. He quotes with approval Athanasius' comment on Gethsemane: "He [Christ] manifests here two wills: the human will, which belongs to the flesh; and the divine will, which belongs to God" (Christ, 146, quoting, Athanasius, De Incar. Et contra Ar., 21 [PG, 26, 1021b]). The same is found in Pope Leo (Ibid., 25), in John of Damascus (Byzantine Theology, 45), and in Gregory Palamas (Ibid., 205).

190 “Christ's Humanity”, 23; cf., Byzantine Theology, 156.

191 “Confessing Christ”, 122.
saving deed,\textsuperscript{192} and if therefore there is a proper sense in which the church speaks of a concealment of God under Christ's mortality so that the passion of Christ is God's "hidden but decisive triumph over death",\textsuperscript{193} yet our eyes and minds are opened to perceive and know the glory of God consummately displayed in Christ's passion and death. The church gladly confesses "the central biblical notion that the glory of God – the God who is Love – was manifested precisely on the Cross".\textsuperscript{194}

That the real distinction between person and nature does not compromise theopaschism and the church's confession that the kenosis of the Son manifests and does not conceal the glory of God is further confirmed by Meyendorff's interpretation of the \textit{communicatio idiomatum} or \textit{perichoresis} ("interpenetration") of the natures.\textsuperscript{195} Strictly speaking, the \textit{communicatio} applies to the hypostasis of the Son and to his human nature: "Only the divine hypostasis, not the divine nature, receives and assumes".\textsuperscript{196} As the Son receives the divine nature from the Father, so is it the Son who assumes human nature.

By virtue of his deity the attributes of God are appropriately applied to his flesh: the glory of God "becomes the 'glory of the body'" of Christ.\textsuperscript{197} By virtue of his having

\begin{footnotes}
\item[192] \textit{Byzantine Theology}, 171.
\item[193] \textit{Byzantine Theology}, 162.
\item[194] "Christ's Humanity", 15; cf., \textit{Byzantine Theology}, 162.
\item[195] \textit{Christ}, 210.
\item[196] \textit{Christ}, 170.
\item[197] \textit{Christ} 171, quoting John of Damascus, \textit{In transf.}, 12 (PG, 96, col. 564bc).
\end{footnotes}
assumed human nature, the properties of the flesh are properly attributable to God.\textsuperscript{198} But, "this is not an absolute reciprocity".\textsuperscript{199} The implicit "dissymmetry" is crucially maintained by insisting upon the real difference between hypostasis and nature: the flesh is deified but the divine nature is not "carnified".\textsuperscript{200} Nonetheless, it is God, the Son of God, who is properly said to have been "born of the Virgin Theotokos, suffered, and died".\textsuperscript{201} So that, precisely in his birth, passion, and death the glory of God is revealed. "Oh miracle surpassing all intelligence! For the glory did not come towards the body from outside, but from within, from the supra-divine divinity of the Word of God, united to the body according to the hypostasis, in an unspeakable way".\textsuperscript{202}

\textsuperscript{198} Meyendorff is for the most part favourably disposed towards Moltmann and especially his recovery of genuine theopaschism. But he is astonished by his claim that "the patristic period 'was not in a position to identify God Himself with the suffering and the death of Jesus'" and that "the theopaschite formula was rejected" ("Christ's Humanity", 16, and "Reply", 186 n. 5, quoting J. Moltmann, \textit{The Crucified God} [New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974], 227, 228). He refutes the claim with quotations from St Ignatius ("\textit{Pathos tou Theou}", Ignatius of Antioch, \textit{Rom.}, VI, 3 [\textit{Christ}, 224 n. 4], which Moltmann himself mentions and dismisses (\textit{Crucified God}, 227)), St Gregory Nazianzen ("'We needed a God made flesh and put to death'" [\textit{Christ}, 71, and "Christ's Humanity", 16, quoting Gregory Nazianzen, \textit{Oratio 45}, 28 (\textit{PG} 36, col. 661cd)], and "such terms as 'blood of God' and 'crucified God'" [\textit{Christ}, 71, quoting Gregory Nazianzen, \textit{Oratio 45}, 19 and 22 (\textit{PG} 36, col. 649c and 653a)]), St Cyril of Alexandria ("the 'Logos suffered in the flesh'" ["Christ's Humanity", 16, quoting "the famous Twelfth Anathematism against Nestorius"]; and finally by noting that "'Theopaschism' was formally endorsed by the Fifth Ecumenical Council (553 A.D.)," whose authority is accepted in principle, both in the East and the West" ("Reply", 186 n. 5; "Christ's Humanity", 16).

\textsuperscript{199} \textit{Christ}, 170.

\textsuperscript{200} \textit{Christ}, 170.

\textsuperscript{201} \textit{Christ}, 170.

\textsuperscript{202} \textit{Christ}, 171; quoting John of Damascus, \textit{In transf.}, 2 (\textit{PG} 96, col. 548c-549a).
The Mutual Orientation to Communion of God and Humanity

God and humanity are different – essentially different. The difference remains uncompromised in creation, in the hypostatic union, and in the eschatological theosis of the new creation. The difference is sometimes described in terms of God’s sovereign freedom or transcendence with respect to all that he has made. God alone is creator, judge, and redeemer. Human beings are creatures – judged, redeemed, and made participant in the triune life of God. The difference does not entail incompatibility and competition. On the contrary, Creator and creature are naturally oriented towards one another.

We may consider it from God’s side first. Meyendorff acknowledges that it was not proper for divine nature to be born or to die. Nonetheless, he asks, is human experience as such alien ("contrary and foreign") to the divine nature? Might it be possible to formulate an ontology that, while not compromising God's transcendence

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204 "Christ's Humanity", 10; Creation", 35; "Reply", 187.

205 "Creation", 28; Byzantine Theology, 129; Catholicity, 71. Among other things this means "'God-talk' could not be determined by logical necessities, or philosophical formulations" ("Humanity", 62).

206 "Creation", 35.

207 "Humanity", 63; "Christ's Humanity", 21.

208 "Christ's Humanity", 19.
and freedom, comprehends his involvement with creation as natural to him? Meyendorff is wary. From Origen to Tillich and beyond, the attempt systematically to conceptualise God's natural involvement with the world has been unable to avoid compromising the essentially free and personal character of that engagement. A certain apophaticism must be preserved. "The divine acts of creation, providence, and salvation ... were certainly not 'unnatural' to His Being". 209 There is an "'openness' to creation" in divine nature itself: the love of God, God's "concern for creation's destiny", expresses the very heart of his being. 210

Humanity, from its side, is naturally open to God. Here I will summarise earlier material. Authentic human nature o'erleaps itself in a dynamic ascent towards communion with the one to whom it owes its very existence. It is originally and inherently graced. Which is to say – because grace is nothing other than the very life of God – human nature was (is, and always will be) originally, naturally, and finally ordered towards participation in God's life. Moreover, far from being consumed by the divine life, its natural orientation to participation in God intensifies both its similarity but also and equally its dissimilarity with the divine nature. 211

The naturally dynamic and mutual openness of the divine and human natures is always hypostatic. Neither of the natures moves towards the other on its own, of itself. 212 Their communion is never merely an impersonal manifestation of each

209 Though, this must not be taken to imply that "they were ... a necessity for Him" ("Christ's Humanity", 19-20).

210 "Christ's Humanity", 19, 21.

211 Christ, 211-12.

Meyendorff is more often than not critical of the closed autonomy of Western secularist, but also theological, anthropologies. There are however noteworthy exceptions. Pre-eminent among them is Rahner's theocentric anthropology which is "precisely in the line of Greek patristic tradition, although expressed in modern existential philosophy"; Schillebeeckx wins similar approval (Christ, 211; cf., "Confessing Christ", 123).

212 "Christ's Humanity", 21; "Creation", 29.
towards the other. It is the failure to take sufficiently into account the enhypostatic character of the communion of God and humanity that has given rise to the more or less pantheistic extravagances of ancient Origenism and, in more recent years, sophiology in the East, and in the West theologies inspired by the likes of de Chardin and Tillich.

The dynamic openness of God to creation is trinitarian. It is originally the mutual openness of the three divine hypostases. Economically, it is the Father's sending of the Son, the Logos by whom he created and sustains all things, into the world in the power of the Spirit through whom he created and sustains all things. The mutually enhypostatic character of the internal and external divine relations accounts for the fact that God's acts are always "voluntary".

As it is the triune hypostases of God that possess the divine nature, so it is human hypostases, subjects, that are possessed of human nature. The theocentric dynamic of human nature is existentially enacted by human individuals. They are the agents whose natural agency is oriented to communion with God. They possess the natural property of transcending themselves and of entering into the life of God. That being said, communion with God is not a property of human nature. As the Son goes beyond divine nature in becoming flesh, but without losing or letting go of his

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214 Meyendorff's critiques may be found in Byzantine Theology, 4, 12; "Creation", 27-8, 30-3; Christ, 131-8; "Humanity", 62; and, "New Life", 158-9, 161.

215 "This inter-personal communion of the Divine persons is actually that which constitute [sic] Divine Being" ("Christ's Humanity", 20, italics original; cf., "Reply", 187-8; "New Life", 160-1).

216 "Creation", 34; "Christian Dogma", 87.

217 "New Life", 161; Byzantine Theology, 140, cf., 13.
deity, so human persons go beyond their human nature in entering into the trinitarian fellowship of love – but without losing or letting go of their humanity.\textsuperscript{218} Human beings are naturally theocentric. They are also "called" to enact that natural dynamic, called by God to enter into the divine life for which he made them and in which they find their true fulfillment.\textsuperscript{219}

Emphasis upon God's call alerts us to the fact that, if the cooperative synergy between God and humanity is mutually robust and active, it is also asymmetrical.\textsuperscript{220} The initiative lies always with the gracious God, creator and saviour. Human cooperation is always responsive – free, willing, active, and personal – but responsive. The Word, the command of God, becomes the creature's creative logos.\textsuperscript{221}

Explicit christological affirmations have been noticeably absent so far in this section. That has been deliberate. The original orientation to cooperation of God and the human creature is the ontological presupposition for the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ.\textsuperscript{222} That being said, on account of the Fall of Adam the incarnation is the epistemological presupposition, the revelation and demonstration of that mutual orientation. More importantly, it is its redemptive restoration, its salvatory fulfillment.

\textsuperscript{218} "New Life", 161; cf., "Reply", 188; also, "Christ's Humanity", 22.

\textsuperscript{219} Catholicity, 71.

\textsuperscript{220} Byzantine Theology, 40, 154.

\textsuperscript{221} "Creation", 29, with specific reference to Basil of Caesarea's comments on Gen 1.24 (On the Six Days 5 [PG 29:1160d]).

\textsuperscript{222} "The hypostatic union of divinity and humanity in Christ ... presupposes an interpenetration of divine and human life" (Christ, 210). "This 'openness' [of the divine and created natures] made possible a perfect union of two natures in the Hypostasis of the Logos who became flesh" ("Christ's Humanity", 21).
The non-competitive relationship of God and humanity in Christ is not the same as that of the original created order. This should not surprise us, as we saw at some length in a previous section that Christ assumed not original but fallen human nature. I will briefly summarise the relevant material from that earlier section. In Jesus Christ, the non-competitive relationship of his deity and humanity was progressively realised over time; though not from sinful to sinless, but from immaturity and undeveloped potential to complete maturity and enacted fulfillment. It was achieved through sweat and tears – in an existential struggle against all the deceptions and temptations of Satan. The mutual openness of God and creation undone by the Fall was healed and restored by Christ in the concrete historicity of his incarnate existence. He was able to do this only because he was God. Yet, he restored and transformed it humanly.

Gethsemane

Meyendorff reads Gethsemane entirely through the lens of Maximus the Confessor. As the outstanding diothelite champion of the seventh century, Maximus expounds the text against all “unilaterally theocentric” readings. At no point is Jesus in conflict with the Father. His initial request that the cup should pass from him does not reflect “resistance or rebellion”, as if he experienced the alienated character of his assumed and fallen human will only in the second part of the prayer to reject it in favour and by virtue of his properly divine will.

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223 See especially, “Christ’s Humanity”, 30, 32; “New Life”, 153, 165-6. For my translations of two texts in which Maximus treats of Gethsemane, see Appendix 2.


The whole prayer is a divine and a human act. The divine will no less active than the human in the first part, nor the human less than the divine in the second. But divine and human agency operate differently. As God, in common with the Father and the Spirit, Jesus willed “at all times” humanity’s salvation through the cross. The will of the triune God and therefore of the incarnate Son concerns the “entire incarnate process ... not single moments of the life of Jesus”. There were not “several distinct divine decisions ... one for each of Christ’s actions”.

It is God’s will that the redemptive career of the incarnate Son should entail his “active human cooperation”, his “human free acceptance and effort”, his moment by moment treading the way of the cross as a man and therefore according to the dynamic peculiar to human obedience. That dynamic “requires struggle and efforts of will”, ongoing and persistent obedience through time, multiple and successive decisions in ever changing circumstances, in face of the increasingly acute sense of his own peril, and therefore in the maelstrom of all the properly human responses of

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226 “Christ’s Humanity”, 30.


228 “Christ’s Humanity”, 26.

229 “Christ’s Humanity”, 30.

230 “Confessing Christ”, 117.

231 Though to my knowledge Meyendorff never explicitly refers to it, I think it is fair to assume that he would have agreed with Maximus (pace Barth and Balthasar) that obedience (also prayer) is a peculiarly human activity: “[The incarnate Son] willed to be, and became, obedient. This was not [the Son] as God, but as man; as God, according to the Fathers, he was neither obedient nor disobedient.... He was therefore possessed of a human will” (Maximus the Confessor, Dialogue with Pyrrhus [PG 91, 324b]).

232 “Confessing Christ, 118.
“reticence before death, fright, and anguish that provoke sweat and drops of blood ...”.

In the first part of the prayer, Jesus, according to his human nature, properly recoils before his immanent suffering and death, beseeching the Father for another way. Only then, having contemplated the full horror of what lies before him, his appeal reflecting his anguish and dread, does he in the second part of the prayer transcend his own predicament and surrender himself in an act of “final human acceptance ... of that which was necessary for the salvation of humanity”.

This human decision and act of will was “truly valid and redeeming”, but only because its subject and agent was the Son and Logos of God. “It is the Logos who ‘willed’ in a human way. It is He who exercised human freedom – to redeem it”.


234 “Through the hypostatic union, His human will, precisely because it always conforms itself to the divine, also performs the ‘natural movement’ of human nature” (Byzantine Theology, 38). According to Maximus that ‘natural movement’ includes recoiling in the face of suffering and death as the threat of that “non-being” from which we were originally brought into being by God (Maximus the Confessor, Dialogue with Pyrrhus [PG 297 bc]).

235 “Christ’s Humanity”, 30.

236 If with Maximus Meyendorff rejects all forms of “unilateral theocentric[ity]”, he is equally opposed to the “anthropological maximalism (in the words of G. Florovsky)” of Antiochenes (ancient and modern) for whom “Jesus Christ’s human nature was autonomous ... maintain[ing] up to a point its free will and pursu[ing] an independent development and activity (yet in union with the Word)”, and thereby achieving (i.e., his human nature as such) “the merit of our salvation” (Christ, 17). Meyendorff also rejects what he variously calls “moralistic”, “psychologistic”, “subjectivist” readings of Gethsemane according to which “redemption really took place in Gethsemane, when Jesus manifested his ultimate ‘compassionate love’ in his prayer for sinful humanity before the passion” (“New Life”, 153, 166).

237 “Christ’s Humanity”, 30. Christ’s redemption of human freedom constitutes his restoration and realization of the original imago Dei according to which the human creature is to find its fulfilment not in self-will but in reaching beyond itself towards union with the One whose image s/he bears (“Confessing Christ”, 122; Christ, 114; "New Life", 158, 160; Catholicity, 22).
first part of the Gethsemane prayer, far from compromising or contradicting, serves rather to demonstrate the full extent, the immensity of the act of human obedience to the will of the Father that took Jesus willingly to the cross.
Mutual Coninherence

The double agency of Christ according to Hans Urs von Balthasar

Accounting for the double agency of Christ is a matter, for Balthasar, of plotting the hypostatic and enacted union of God’s infinite freedom and the constrained freedom of the human creature. In theodramatic terms, at issue is the space that remains once God himself steps onto the world stage. Must he not, per definitionem, take not merely center stage but the whole of it and more, to the exclusion of all other roles?238 In actual fact, the infinite freedom of God includes his willingness to make space for other roles, even, indeed most especially, in the event of his taking the stage himself. Incarnate, he exercises his infinite freedom within the constraints of the finite freedom which he has made his own, exercising it on its own terms and in perfect conformity with his infinite freedom.239 He does all this and is able to do so by virtue of the


239 Laying out the ‘fundamental’ groundwork (in the 2nd Volume of the *Theo-Drama*) for his later dogmatic work (in Volumes 3-5), Balthasar writes as follows. “[T]he entire theo-drama has its center in
kenotic activity that originally characterises his intra-trinitarian life and economically constitutes his incarnate existence as the infinitely free divine Word become finitely free human flesh.

The Deity of Christ

Verbum caro factum est. This is the fact, Balthasar insists, because it is God's deed – the enfleshment of the Word of God. As such it is original and superabundant, the starting point and center of all theology, indeed of all Christian faith. There is no getting behind it in pursuit of a more original (epistemological or ontological) ground, either for the incarnate one or for ourselves. As the action of the ever-free God, the event of the Word's enfleshment brings with it, even is, its own sole presupposition. For "God is ... the absolute ground and meaning of his own action".

The initiative in the incarnation is the Word's. It is not at all a human movement from below, but entirely an act of the divine Logos' free will, his coming down from above "to fill man up with his loving self-expropriation". The language of descent

The encounter and reciprocal interpenetration that takes place here ... is the climax of the relationship between infinite and finite; hence it is also the climax of world history and of salvation history" (TD 2, 201-2).


242 TL 2, 283.
serves to emphasise the freedom and generosity of God in becoming flesh. He is under no constraint nor does he gain anything for himself. The agape of God is not elicited by "any longing or any avid, godward 'ascent' on the part of Eros". 243

It is the divine person of the Son who is revealed in the humanity of Jesus, and that most luminously in him crucified. 244 Pilate's ecce homo must be supplemented by the even more definitive “ecce Deus” implicit but nonetheless "gazed on by John himself and solemnly presented (John 19.35)". 245

The ultimate initiative in God's becoming incarnate is the Word's. At the same time, the "ultimate possibility" of that becoming is the intratrinitarian life of God – the "generative self-expropriation" of the Father to the Son and of Father and Son to the Spirit. 246 The incarnation is not a "de-generat[ion]" of God from what he is eternally, but the exercise of his original freedom to become what has sprung creatively from him. 247 Balthasar's preferred description of this is in terms of the Son's economic missio and eternal processio. They are properly distinguishable. Yet the personal subject of both is one. It is the eternally begotten of the Father, "the whole person of the Son", who enacts his mission in the world. 248 Indeed, the Son's mission continues and concludes his processio. 249

243 TD 2, 412.

244 Mysterium 129.

245 Mysterium 128-9.

246 TL 2, 284.


248 TD 3, 157, also, 156, 228.
The biblical revelation does not permit us to "split the Son of God" so that he unaffectedly observes from heaven the "sent' Son" dwelling in time.\(^\text{250}\) Inexplicable, and without implying a mythological alteration in God, it must be said "in all seriousness and realism" that the Son's mission in time affects him as the eternal Son of God.\(^\text{251}\) More than that, the dramatic dimension of Jesus' life and person is not attributable merely to his humanity; it derives from the divine life itself.\(^\text{252}\) That dramatic dimension within God's eternal being includes the self-givenness and filial thanksgiving that constitute the Yes of the Son to the "primal kenosis" of the Father's gift of consubstantial divinity.\(^\text{253}\) That eternally vibrant and vital Yes is the "absolute presupposition" for the dramatic dynamism of his incarnate career.\(^\text{254}\)

The mission of the Son presupposes his eternal \textit{processio}, and the eternal Son is directly affected by his \textit{missio} in time. Equally, the incarnation directly involves the whole Trinity: its dimensions are trinitarian.\(^\text{255}\) Neither the Father nor the Spirit is

\(^{249}\) \textit{TL} 2, 154; "... as Thomas says, the Son's \textit{missio} is the economic form of his eternal \textit{processio} from the Father" (\textit{TD} 3, 201).

\(^{250}\) \textit{TD} 3, 228.

\(^{251}\) \textit{TD} 3, 228. "Since the Subject in whom person and mission are identical can only be divine, it follows that 'God's being' really 'undergoes development' (E. Jüngel) ..." (ibid., 157).

\(^{252}\) \textit{TD} 3, 159.


\(^{254}\) \textit{TD} 4, 326.

\(^{255}\) "Even in the economic order, the logic of the incarnate Son cannot be restricted to the 'historical Jesus', but includes his 'from' the Father and his 'toward' the Spirit" (\textit{TL} 2, 155). See also the brief but elegant trinitarian exposition of Ephesians 1.3-10, 13-14 that introduces the section, "Verbum Caro: Trinitarian Dimensions" (ibid., 296-9)
unaffected by the incarnation.\textsuperscript{256} Jesus is the Father's Word, the self-revealing of the Father. He is consistently and to the end the Father's gesture of self-offering to and for the world, the Father's gift and giving.\textsuperscript{257} The testimony to the Father's direct and sustained involvement is Jesus' once for all and continuous consent to his mission as ever and anew given \textit{from} the Father, and undertaken in perpetual self-offering \textit{to} the Father.\textsuperscript{258} Equally, the Spirit carries the Son into the womb of the Virgin, is bestowed without limit by the Father at Jesus' baptism, mediates the Father's will to him all the way to the cross; finally, by the Spirit's power the Father raises Jesus from the dead.\textsuperscript{259} The testimony to the Spirit (as to the Father) is on the lips of the incarnate Son: "'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me' (Luke 4.18)."\textsuperscript{260}

The two descriptions of the incarnation in terms of, on the one hand, the sovereign freedom of the divine Word and, on the other, the triune initiative of God are not incompatible but mutually entailed.\textsuperscript{261} The logic of the incarnation is the logic of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{256} \textit{Mysterium} 30.
\item \textsuperscript{257} "The Son, as man, is the language of the Father, the gift that he never ceases to proffer" (\textit{TL} 2, 296-7, cf., 126, 247, 318).
\item \textsuperscript{258} \textit{TD} 3, 514, cf., 227.
\item \textsuperscript{259} "He [the Spirit] is profoundly involved from within, right to the very end" (\textit{TD} 3, 514). In context, this refers to the whole world drama; but for Balthasar that comprehensive reference always presupposes the central act of the incarnate mission of the Son.
\item \textsuperscript{260} \textit{TL} 2, 298.
\item \textsuperscript{261} \textit{TL} 2, 151.
\end{itemize}
the trinitarian love, the mutual glorification of Father, Son, and Spirit.\textsuperscript{262} And it is the incarnation alone (above all, the cross)\textsuperscript{263} that reveals the intratinitarian logic of love.\textsuperscript{264}

That logic may best be expressed in terms of will and agency, the contours of the freedom of the divine love.\textsuperscript{265} Provocatively, Balthasar articulates it in terms of both the common will of the triune God and the will of each of the divine Persons.\textsuperscript{266} As the author of a major treatise on Maximus, he is alert to the pitfalls but also the opportunities afforded him in risking such speech. A proper insistence upon the single will of God corresponding to and deriving from the one divine \textit{ousia} must not compress everything into "an airless unity and identity", but must allow for "areas of infinite freedom" occupied and possessed by the divine hypostases.\textsuperscript{267} The divine nature, including the divine will, is not possessed as "an untouchable treasure", but "is defined through and through by the modes of divine being (\textit{tropos tès hyparxos})".\textsuperscript{268} Perfectly open to, and interpenetrating each other, the Three are not interchangeable. Each is possessed equally of the one and only sovereign freedom of God, yet each exercises it uniquely within the trinitarian unity of the \textit{ordo processionis}. The "use" they make of

\textsuperscript{262} \textit{TL} 2, 299-300; cf., \textit{TD} 4, 243, 319.
\textsuperscript{263} \textit{Mysterium} 29, 38, 129-30, 138.
\textsuperscript{264} \textit{TD} 3, 18, 38, 258; \textit{TD} 4, 341; \textit{TL} 2, 125, 126, 148, 160-1.
\textsuperscript{265} \textit{TD} 4, 265-6.
\textsuperscript{266} \textit{TL} 2, 246.
\textsuperscript{267} \textit{TD} 2, 257, italics original, cf., 297.
\textsuperscript{268} \textit{TD} 2, 258.
their freedom to "invent" acts of love is unpredictable; it is the privilege of each to do "surprising and astounding things" in exercising the one divine freedom.\textsuperscript{269}

How does this play itself out in the \textit{processio} and \textit{missio} of the eternal Son? As God he is eternal, infinite freedom; as the Son of the Father he is this freedom "in the mode of readiness, receptivity, obedience and hence of appropriate response".\textsuperscript{270} But, if he receives his freedom from the Father, how can he properly be said to be possessed of the same sovereign freedom as the Father? Possessing the life of God "'in himself (\textit{en heautôi})' (John 5.26)", must he not also possess it "of himself"?\textsuperscript{271} But the Son is what the Father does: so much so that, consubstantially begotten of the Father, he receives himself from the Father and as such "accepts the originless, self-possessing God", what we may call God's inalienable self-sufficiency.\textsuperscript{272} The Son therefore "dedicates himself" to the reconciliation of the world "as eternally" as does the Father.\textsuperscript{273} His mission is not his "subsequently, a posteriori ... by persuasion"; rather is it his originally and "spontaneously".\textsuperscript{274} The Father hands over the Son for the salvation of the world; equally, Christ is the gift that he (Christ) actively gives of himself.\textsuperscript{275}

\textsuperscript{269} \textit{TD} 2, 258-9.

\textsuperscript{270} \textit{TD} 2, 267.

\textsuperscript{271} \textit{TD} 2, 267.

\textsuperscript{272} \textit{TD} 2, 267-68. The "originless self-possessing God" that the Son accepts is "that fullness of being that must always be included and reflected upon in any \textit{theologia}. (That is why it will not do simply to replace the so-called 'theoontological' categories of philosophy with 'personological' categories, that is, to dissolve Being and its relationships)" (ibid., 268). In a similar vein, see D. M. MacKinnon, "Substance' in christology – a cross-bench view", in \textit{Christ Faith and History: Cambridge Studies in Christology}, ed. S. W. Sykes and J. P. Clayton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 279-300.

\textsuperscript{273} \textit{TD} 3, 514.

\textsuperscript{274} \textit{TD} 3, 516, italics original.

\textsuperscript{275} \textit{Mysterium} 111-12; cf., \textit{TD} 3, 516-17.
The freedom of the Son then is freedom in the mode of readiness to obey, and that without compromise to his absolute divine sovereignty. Accordingly, the obedience that characterises his mission in time is not a peculiarly human attribute that functions in contrast to or in spite of his deity. Rather is it continuous with and the manifestation of, even determined by, his eternal mode of being.\textsuperscript{276} The eternal free decision to save the world, "originating in the Son as much as in the Father and the Son", reflects itself in the economy in such a way that the command of the Father according to which Jesus consistently orders his life unto death "seems increasingly to have the form of a 'granting', a 'ratification' of the Son's will".\textsuperscript{277} Equally, the absolute spontaneity of the Son is his readiness to pour himself out in whatever way the Father may determine.\textsuperscript{278}

\textsuperscript{276} (Pace Meyendorff). "The hymn found in Philippians 2.5 and the Letter to the Hebrews extend this obedience (regarded as a summary of the life of Jesus) to the realm of pre-existence: his inclination was, in the large, already an act of obedience (Hebrews 10.5-10)" (Mysterium 105). "The Son becomes mere man, to such an extent, indeed, that his human obedience ['this "impossible obedience"] can be explained only in terms of his divine obedience" (TL 2, 254).

\textsuperscript{277} TD 4, 259.

\textsuperscript{278} TD 4, 329-30, 335. In his commentary on TD, Aidan Nichols sharply distinguishes, apparently in Balthasar's name, between the eternal mode of the Son according to which he "cannot truly be said to obey if we only think of the Father's eternal decision to send him, since that 'decision' is his own eternal decision likewise", and his activity on earth where "the Son can be said to obey the Father ..." (Nichols, No Bloodless Myth, 132). The quotations I have included in this last paragraph indicate that Balthasar is not as careful to maintain the distinction as perhaps Nichols would like him to be, at least according to Nichols' criteria. There is a difference between the Son's obedience in the eternal and in the temporal modes (at TD 3, 191 that difference is between the eternal "correspondence" and economic "obedience" to the Father), but that does not stop him from repeatedly referring to the former, without qualification, as obedience.
The Humanity of Christ

Even a cursory treatment of Balthasar's comprehensive and many-layered soteriology is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, in moving to his treatment of Christ's human agency it will be useful briefly to take account of one of the numerous models he deploys, that of covenant. The divine and human purpose ingredient in the identity of the incarnate Son of God is the establishment of a new covenant between God and the creature. Both parties faithfully enact the covenant in perfect freedom in Jesus Christ. In the fundamental categories of the second volume of the *Theo-Drama*, Jesus, through the whole course of his life, perfectly exercises infinite and finite freedom, bringing them to their mutual consummation in his passion and death.\(^{279}\)

The biblical model of the covenant willingly fulfilled by both divine and human partners in Jesus demands of the church the affirmation of the full deity and unabbreviated humanity of the covenant mediator.\(^{280}\)

Having taken account of Christ's divine agency, we look now for an equally robust description of his human activity. Though there must be no suggestion that the two activities are sealed off from one another, operating independently. The Chalcedonian criteria, unconfused but also inseparable, are firmly in place.\(^{281}\)

More than that, as was made clearer in the years following Chalcedon, the two activities are asymmetrically related. Whatever is said about Jesus' distinctively human agency, it will always be "only as the acting of the triune God", only as the redeeming deed of "the

\(^{279}\)TD 2, 252-3.

\(^{280}\)The Fathers' "urgent need – because of the christological heresies – to assert the covenant Mediator's full divinity and unabbreviated humanity is not due to some irruption of Greek thought into the biblical milieu: it results from the effort made to secure the full soteriological meaning of the New Testament's *pro nobis*" (TD 4, 245).

\(^{281}\)TD 2, 201-2.
Father's wholly unique Son”.\textsuperscript{282} The Gospels depict Jesus as one whose identity derives from the eternal salvific decision of God. He comes forth from that decision and his activity is uninterruptedly conditioned by it.\textsuperscript{283} Even the cross, where God appears to be most absent, is uniquely God's act.\textsuperscript{284}

Yet, far from compromising Christ's human agency, this asymmetry confirms it. Golgotha is the deed of God. But, as Balthasar immediately interjects, it is the deed of "God as \textit{man}, to be sure, and God \textit{only} as man, in such a way that, as nowhere else, man is valued".\textsuperscript{285} In Christ, God and the human are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, it is Jesus' deity that accounts for his being in the closest possible human solidarity with his fellow human beings, a solidarity so profound that he is able to initiate them into, "communicate a share in", his cross.\textsuperscript{286} Unconfused, it is neither Christ's divine nor his human activity on its own, but his "Godmanhood" which capacitates him to enact and fulfill his role as the world's unique redeemer.\textsuperscript{287}

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\textsuperscript{282} \textit{Mysterium} 136, 137-8.
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\textsuperscript{283} \textit{TD} 2, 253-4; \textit{TD} 3, 242.
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\textsuperscript{284} \textit{Mysterium} 138.
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\textsuperscript{285} \textit{Mysterium} 138.
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\textsuperscript{286} \textit{Mysterium} 137-8. Balthasar distinguishes his "eschatological" interpretation of the solidarity of the God-man with humanity from the existential accounts of, among others, Rahner and de Chardin (ibid., 137 n.106). His is not the solidarity of "a 'new existential' within the reality of the world", and the Godmanhood of Christ is "more than the 'highest case' of a transcendental anthropology" (ibid., 137, 138).
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\textsuperscript{287} \textit{Mysterium} 138; cf., \textit{TD} 2, 201.
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That being said, the church has a responsibility concretely to specify the contours of his distinctively human agency, his finite freedom. This is not an invitation to define Jesus' humanity in terms of a set of independently derived anthropological criteria. As in all Christian theology, so here, the primary task is to attend carefully to the biblical witness to Jesus. What do we find there?

In the first place, and as constitutive of everything that follows, Jesus is possessed of and obedient to the Spirit, so that his humanity – in origin and all along the way to the resurrection – is "due to the operation of the Spirit". This is the point of Balthasar's provocative insistence on a trinitarian inversion at the heart of the incarnation. From conception to resurrection the Son surrenders himself to the activity of the Spirit. Even in the act of incarnation the Spirit's activity is not subsequent to that of the Logos. Not the Logos but the Spirit actively accomplishes the hypostatic union.

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288 Without stinting the work of earlier theologians and councils, the urgent necessity of this task became really evident in the years following Chalcedon, and it is to Maximus the Confessor that the Church is especially indebted in this regard. Nonetheless, even with the defeat of monothelitism at the Sixth Ecumenical Council (681), the task remained uncompleted – to this day (TD 3, 215-16).

289 The post-Chalcedonian achievement of Maximus (among others) is attributable in large part to a "get[ting] beyond the horizon of understanding shared by the antagonistic formulas and ... look[ing] through them to their object, the mystery revealed in the Bible" (TD 3, 215). Even in TD 2 where Balthasar abstracts from the "concrete dramatic modalities" of actuality, devoting himself solely to the "fundamental articulations" of infinite and finite freedom, he insists "our starting point is always the given relationship between God and man as set forth in biblical revelation" (TD 2, 229). That is why "anthropology can only attain its full stature within Christology, and so it must adopt its standards from the latter" (ibid., 202; cf., TD 3, 13).

290 TD 3, 189.

291 See esp., TD 3, 183-91, 521-23; also, Mysterium 30, 91.

292 TD 3, 183-4. Balthasar discusses his disagreement in this regard with Thomas (and H. Mühlen, whose "doctrine of the Spirit is largely built on ... [that] of St. Thomas") at ibid., 184-6, 348-9. He also notes that "[m]any of the Fathers regard the Son as incarnating himself", including Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, and Leo; he offers quotations from Irenaeus and Cyril of Alexandria in favour of his own position (ibid., 184 n. 31).
If the Son does not incarnate himself, nevertheless in becoming incarnate he is not merely passive but exercises his own proper activity. Balthasar variously describes it as his surrendering, handing over, and entrusting himself to the activity of the Spirit. That is the point of the trinitarian inversion. Whereas, eternally the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, in the economy of salvation the Spirit mediates between Father and Son, effecting the incarnation of the Son and making possible his obedience in the flesh. Specifically, the Spirit "takes over the function of" presenting to the Son the eternally triune will as peculiarly the Father's.

The two sides, the 'before' and 'after' of the trinitarian inversion are not contradictory but complementary. The second person of the Godhead is essentially defined by his eternal readiness to obey the Father; and their ordered mutuality eternally breathes forth the person of the Spirit. Ingredient in the eternal purpose of the triune God is the decision that the Son should become flesh. In that eternal decision, the Son's self-offering (and the Spirit's) are as original as the Father's offering of the Son. That decision, and more particularly the Son's self-offering, entails a change in the mode of his relation to the Father. In the Son's becoming flesh, the eternal immediacy of Father and Son gives place to, is transformed into, a mediated relation.

293 "... a form of action, which – humanly speaking – demands of the subject more self-possession and initiative than the pursuance of self-imposed precepts and goals" (TD 3, 186).

294 TD 3, 186-8.

295 TD 3, 188.

296 TD 3, 187.


298 TD 3, 183, 286. "It cannot be objected that this contradicts the law that the order of the economic Trinity must correspond to that of the immanent Trinity" (ibid., 184). "What we have termed 'inversion' is ultimately only the projection of the immanent Trinity onto the 'economic' plane, whereby the Son's
The contours of that mediated relation define the creaturely reality, the human agency and activity hypostatically united to the Son in the incarnation. In brief, those contours disclose the following profile. In the power of the Spirit, Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, freely and spontaneously pursues his mission, in unfailing and prayerful obedience to the command of the Father, unto death.

In filling out that profile, Balthasar sets himself the particular task of accounting for the authenticity of Christ's human freedom when it is defined as obedience to the will of the Father. How are freedom and obedience complementary and not contradictory? Up to this point, I have treated Balthasar's christology primarily from above, in terms of the triune agency of the eternal and incarnate Word. Balthasar's preferred procedure is "from below". In what follows I shall shift my ground and accompany him as he describes from below Christ's distinctively human agency.

'correspondence' to the Father is articulated as 'obedience'” (ibid., 191). "It is not that God, in himself, changes but that the unchangeable God enters into a relationship with creaturely reality, and this relationship imparts a new look to his internal relations.... [T]he new relationship to worldly nature, which is hypostatically united to the Son, highlights one of the infinite possibilities that lie in God's eternal life” (ibid., 523).

What happens to the trinitarian inversion when Christ is exalted to the Father's right hand? Because this takes me beyond the scope of my thesis, I will offer here only the briefest answer, mostly in Balthasar's own words. "When the Son has been resurrected and the economic form of the Trinity is suspended and absorbed into the immanent, there is no reversion to former conditions; nothing needs to be 'inverted' once again. What happens is that the temporal and vertical form [the Spirit 'above' the Son; the Son's doing not his own will but that of the Father who is greater than he] is lifted up into the eternal and horizontal dimension” (ibid., 522-3). The new relationship with creaturely reality entered into by God in the hypostatic union "is not something purely external, as if this relationship ad extra did not really affect him"; rather, it "imparts a new look to his internal relations" (ibid., 523). Nonetheless, though there is no reversion to former conditions, "the 'trinitarian and soteriological inversion' is transcended in Christ's exalted state.... [T]he exalted Lord is given manifest power, even in his humanity, to breathe forth the Spirit" (ibid., 189).

299 A christology from below answers the question, Who is Jesus Christ? in terms of the biblical portrait. More specifically, it asks that question with a view to accounting for who he must be to behave and act as the New Testament depicts him (TD 3, 149-50). It offers a portrait of Christ "that neither preempts the action undertaken by him nor falls back into the kind of purely extrahistorical, static, 'essence' Christology that sees itself as a complete and rounded 'part one', smoothly unfolding into a soteriological 'part two'” (ibid., 149). The event, the history, the incarnate existence of Jesus is integral to christian soteriology and the gospel (TL 2, 190-1). In pursuing christology from below, all along the way "we keep an eye open for the possibility that an answer may eventually come from a 'Christology from above'" (TD 3, 150). Balthasar's christology eventually comprehends all of the classical affirmations, but as inherent (in nucleus at least) in the biblical witness, with its originally ingredient "exegetical ... and dogmatic
From below, the task may be more precisely defined in terms of Jesus' relation to the supratemporal triune decision to send the Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Is the man Jesus merely the temporal manifestation of an alien divine decision made prior to his existence, which he can only subsequently ratify? Or, is he humanly free to make his own decisions even in regard to the salvation of the world, so that indeed salvation depends upon his decisions?

Balthasar will insist upon the authentically human freedom of Jesus as integral to God's saving deed. Before doing so, however, any suggestion that there are two levels of decision-making, an eternal "before" ("the trinitarian plan of salvation") and a temporal "after" ("the decision of Jesus"), must be ruled out from the start. One and the same decision is taken by the Son in different modes, inseparably but also unconfusedly.

How can this be so? Because, within the economy and by virtue of the trinitarian inversion it entails, the incarnate Son receives his personhood with, indeed as, his overlay" (ibid., 149, cf., 59). For Balthasar's most extended essay on method in christology, see ibid., 59-148, "The Problem of Method".

300 TD 3, 197, 225. Balthasar asks the same question at TL 2, 291: "How is the freedom of the 'flesh', in other words, the rational humanity of Christ, secured within what he himself calls the command (mandatum) of the Father? ... If as was shown, an original, free obedience lay already in the Logos' decision to become incarnate, what is to prevent all the actions he will carry out in virtue of his human freedom from being predetermined by this prior decision? ... [T]he question arises whether Jesus' will has any 'choice' but to execute, almost mechanically, the will of the Logos, which as such has always already chosen the Father's will?" See TD 4, 258-61 for Balthasar's discussion of Anselm's sophisticated but insufficient treatment of the issue.

301 TD 3, 197, cf., 199-200, 225-6. Correspondingly, "If we consider Christ's predestination within the perspective of his mission, there is no 'moment' at which it can be seen isolated from the drama of his world mission" (ibid., 254). Equally, "we need not think [of Christ's preexistence] so much in terms of an ante-natal existence .... [A]s Karl Barth continually asserted, there is not a single moment when the Logos can be held to be asarkos, nor does the New Testament entertain such a view. There is no question of prescinding from his Incarnation" (ibid., 255-6).

302 TD 3, 199, 201, 255-6; TD 4, 356.
mission, so that his mission constitutes his personal identity. This is the dramatic center of the concept, person, theologically understood.\textsuperscript{303} There is no more original description of Jesus than that he is the one sent by the Father for the salvation of the world. There is no point at which he is a person apart from, or in waiting for his mission. Nor does the Father's commission possess discrete status apart from the one who will carry it out.\textsuperscript{304} "Is it not astonishing that the Johanine Jesus can say, 'For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down by [sic] life ...' (John 10.17), as if the Father loved the person of the Son only because this person was identified with his mission?"\textsuperscript{305} In Jesus, uniquely, person and act or role are identical,\textsuperscript{306} so that he knows himself precisely as the one whom the Father has sent.\textsuperscript{307}

Jesus is possessed by his mission. But not as by a law from outside, nor by compulsion, nor "as a fatum imposed on him". God's human covenant partner is not merely the object of God's action, "passive and anaesthetized on the operating table

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\textsuperscript{303} An individual conscious human subject possessed of reason and free will is not yet a person as such. "It is when God addresses a conscious subject, tells him who he is and what he means to the eternal God of truth and shows him the purpose of his existence – that is, imparts a distinctive and divinely authorized mission – that we can say of a conscious subject that he is a 'person'" (TD 3, 207). In "the one, sole, archetypal instance" that is Jesus, "it is God who defines who this Subject is and why he is there; it is he who sets forth the meaning, the task, the vocation" (ibid., 220). See the extended discussion, ibid., 203-20; also, "Self as Gift", TD 2, 285-91).
\textsuperscript{304} "[I]ndeed, he is the task ..." (TD 3, 168). "[T]he imparting of being coincides with the imparting of mission" (ibid., 156, cf., 227).
\textsuperscript{305} TD 3, 156.
\textsuperscript{306} TD 3, 156; cf., "His mission [Sendung] alone [i.e., as for no other human person] is identical with the 'I' who is thus sent [gesendet]" (ibid., 231).
\textsuperscript{307} TD 3, 153. "He sees himself so totally as 'coming from the Father' to men ... that there is neither room nor time for any detached reflection of the 'Who am I?' kind. 'Who he is' is exhaustively expressed in his being sent by the Father" (ibid., 172). "Jesus experiences his human consciousness entirely in terms of mission" (ibid., 224).
\textsuperscript{308} TD 3, 227, cf., 198.
while the cancer of his sin is cut out”. 309 Neither is he the instrument of the divine purpose, as if mission took precedence over person. 310

Any suggestion of a merely accidental relationship between the incarnate Son and his human agency must be rejected. Jesus accomplishes his mission within the dimensions of his human existence as the exemplary prototype of human freedom. 311 Possessed by his mission, he possesses it with the creaturely freedom of an individual human being. 312 Everything in him, mind, intelligence and free will, is directed to the fulfillment of his mission. 313 Again, the trinitarian inversion plays its determinative part. The Spirit who is above him as the mediator of the Father's will is also his own indwelling Spirit inspiring him as a man freely to identify with his mission. 314 That inspiration is creative. His mission does not lie in his path ready-made only waiting for him to assemble it. He must take responsibility for fashioning, even inventing it 315 from within the particularities of his own individuality, specific time and place, and the cultures and communities in which he finds himself. 317

309 *TD* 4, 318, cf., 229.

310 *TD* 3, 168.

311 *TD* 3, 149; *TD* 2, 291.

312 “... man's creaturely freedom ... a freedom that has not been eradicated by sin” (*TD* 3, 318).

313 “... it is for the sake of his mission that Jesus is this particular human being” (*TD* 3, 168).

314 *TD* 3, 198, 227.

315 *TD* 3, 198, 200; *TD* 4, 259.

316 “The Logos had become not only flesh but a whole human being" and as such "a very definite, individual human being" (*TD* 3, 235, 237; cf., *TD* 2, 254). Balthasar knows that he is flying in the face of much ancient and not so ancient testimony, including Athanasius, Gregory Nyssa, Leontius of Jerusalem, Meister Eckhart, and post-Hegelian theology. However he takes his stand against their "tendency ...
Human freedom is marked by an essential tension between its two primary data. On the one hand, persons act from within themselves (autexousian), governing themselves (autokratos) as the source of their own particular willing and choosing. This capacity for self-determination, human freedom as autonomy, has characterised Jesus' human agency in our discussion so far. On the other hand, human freedom is contingent. It does not subsist in itself (as God's freedom does) but is marked by an ulterior whence and whither. It comes from and moves toward God as origin and goal. Human freedom is received as gift and task. Integral to the gift is its having already been set on a path, with definite tasks, towards its final goal. In this second mode, human freedom is consent: a lifelong learning to accept that precisely within the limits of its finitude there is, through the liberating grace of the Spirit, room in which to operate and to find its own unique fulfillment.

317 “It is possible to hold the opinion that Jesus' proclamation of God's desire to forgive ... arose organically from the theology of the Old Covenant ...” (TD 3, 181). “This requires only that his Mother shall be acquainted with the religious tradition that looks to the fulfilment of Israel's hope and shall teach it to the Child” (ibid., 176). "From all indications, the Baptist’s appearance and fate served as a sign to Jesus that he should begin his public ministry” (ibid., 178).

318 The "two pillars" of finite freedom that are "seem[ingly] contradictory" (TD 2, 207).

319 TD 2, 213-15; cf., TD 4, 370.

320 TD 2, 213-15, 218, 284.

321 TD 2, 254, 284. The definite tasks are "the demands of covenant righteousness" which set the human covenant partner in the right direction: "'Righteous' (as in Hebrew) means 'di-rec-tion' toward the 'right', and ultimately this 'right' is defined by the divine grace offered to man” (TD 4, 229).

322 TD 2, 238. “We can call this other pole of finite freedom 'theonomy', but we must make sure that this does not obscure or interfere with the autexouion", a danger that is avoided so long as we stay with the
finitude and distinctness from God it is very good. Holding fast to the Yes of God in Christ, the free person lives from and to God, all along the way exploring and learning to follow God in responsive obedience.323 This dynamic orientation to God is not ordered towards a final dissolution of finite freedom into the infinite freedom of God, but rather to the inward fulfillment of the human person as God's distinctively (because creaturely) free covenant partner.324

Jesus’ human agency is marked by this second essential datum as much as by the first. His profound and uninterrupted consent to the will of God, his obedience unto death, far from alienating him from, or obscuring and interfering with his autexousian, inwardly fulfills it.325

Balthasar’s task was to display the complementarity of the freedom and obedience that constitute Jesus’ human agency – to answer the question, How does Jesus’ human freedom retain its "proper sphere of activity" if he came not to do his own will but the will of him who sent him (John 6.38)?326 Thus far I have restricted myself to Balthasar’s formal responses. I turn now to his account of the concrete particulars of

New Testament descriptions of "man's definitive and normative relationship with God" as liberation from "slavery" for the "submission" that is the freedom of the "child of God" (ibid., 230-31).

323 TD 2, 216-17, 230, 238, 254, 398.

324 TD 2, 201, 227, 238, 242, 254, 370-1. The foregoing two paragraphs summarise the extended discussion, in strictly fundamental theological categories, of human freedom in relation to God's freedom found in TD 2, 189-334, "Infinite and Finite Freedom", especially subsections 3, 4, and 5a (207-291). The whole is nicely summarised in TD 4, 370-371.

325 TD 2, 242; TD 4, 237-9. The complementarity of the two poles of finite freedom represents its original created order which in Jesus is redeemed from its self-alienation and inner contradiction occasioned by the Fall (TD 2, 242).

326 TL 2, 291.
Jesus' willing obedience which will demonstrate that it is precisely in his total submission to the will of the Father that Jesus is most authentically free.

The human freedom of Jesus is not a matter of "arbitrary choice", as if he conceives and undertakes his mission "as a private individual".\textsuperscript{327} By virtue of the trinitarian inversion, his mission claims him as the command of the Father addressed to him through the Spirit. It is not a proposal for contemplation. At the Father's command it is to be, \textit{must} be, carried out.\textsuperscript{328} Yet it is not imposed upon him in spite of himself.\textsuperscript{329} He willingly carries it out. He implements it, considers, plans, and especially tests it against the numerous opportunities to fulfill it in any of a variety of ways that will avoid suffering: "in each case he reflects on his mission and rejects them as inappropriate".\textsuperscript{330} Inappropriate, because they would involve his disobeying the Father who has commissioned him.

Obedience is the hallmark of Jesus' existence. The mission to which he willingly consents includes the Father's call for total obedience. Obedience entails his handing himself over to the charge of another. That handing over is so original to his human constitution that it is identical with his person. There is never a moment when he is not handed over, when he is not the one sent by the Father who does only what the Father commands.\textsuperscript{331} At the same time, in the Spirit\textsuperscript{332} he adheres to the Father's will daily

\textsuperscript{327} \textit{TD} 3, 198, 167.

\textsuperscript{328} \textit{TD} 3, 167; cf., "... (a 'must' that ranges from the \textit{dei} of the twelve year-old in Luke 2:49, via the action-filled \textit{dei} of Luke 13:14, John 9:4, and so on, up to the \textit{dei} of the Passion of Matthew 16:21, and so forth)" (ibid., 225).

\textsuperscript{329} "The paradox is this: the mission is not imposed on him from outside, like a 'law'; ... his 'I' is identical with it" (\textit{TD} 3, 167).

\textsuperscript{330} \textit{TD} 3, 168, also, 162, 169.

\textsuperscript{331} \textit{TD} 3, 181-3.
and hourly, handing himself over to the Father’s charge in face of repeated temptations to take charge of himself independently of the Father.\textsuperscript{333} This coincidence of freedom and obedience represents, in contrast to arbitrary freedom, what Balthasar calls the "resolute freedom" with which Jesus lives for his mission and nothing else.\textsuperscript{334}

The Kenosis of the Son

Kenosis is a comprehensive category for Balthasar. The very being of the triune God is originally kenotic, the activity of the three persons being kenotic with respect to one another. In the economy, the Son’s activity is kenotic from virgin conception through the cross. Somewhat arbitrarily I have chosen to set under this heading all that the Son suffers in his incarnate career, drawing the whole to a more expansive conclusion in five summary theses.

Jesus lives and acts in time. Indeed, mission is inherently temporal.\textsuperscript{335} Like any human being he matures over time, so that the original coincidence of his personal

\textsuperscript{332} “In the freedom whereby he affirms his mission, the obedient Son can be completely one with the Father who freely sends him. But at the point of distinction between the Father’s purpose and the Son’s obedience, we discern an essential poise, an essential communication between Father and Son, which can only be the operation of the Holy Spirit” (\textit{TD} 3, 183). “To that extent, that inspiration by the Father [which is the dynamic center of Jesus’ existence] … is not simply the inner \textit{élan} of his love, but submission to the rule and leading of the Holy Spirit (of mission) who 'impels' him (Luke 4.1 and 14, etc.). Even those great affirmations which begin with the word 'I' are not the language of 'self-consciousness' but of mission” (\textit{Mysterium} 91).

\textsuperscript{333} \textit{TD} 3, 157.

\textsuperscript{334} \textit{TD} 3, 225; it is "a deeper freedom than that involved in arbitrary choice" (ibid., 198).

\textsuperscript{335} \textit{TD} 3, 157.
identity and his mission unfolds and is rendered evermore explicit in and through his concrete, moment by moment, enacting of it. 336 It is not merely historical, but also fallen time within which Jesus acts – time "marked by universal sin" and futility, time that brings with it subjection to ignorance and temptation. Mortal and moral frailty continually frustrate natural human existence in time, subjecting human agency to its own peculiar "unfreedom". 337 The Bible calls it the flesh and insists that the Word became this flesh. 338

Accordingly, he acts in ignorance of the times and ways in which his mission will be carried out. 339 He knows from the outset the universal meaning and scope of his task, including the climactic significance of his death towards which he orients his whole life with single-minded concentration. He knows his mission will be fulfilled. But just here a "huge chasm" opens up. 340 His confidence derives from the fact that his mission is the gift and task of the Father. 341 His ignorance reflects the increasingly evident disparity between the Father's demand and his own incapacity to achieve it in

336 “It is only by carrying out his task that the Incarnate One realizes himself” (TD 3, 231, cf., 180-3; TD 4, 234-5).

337 TD 3, 15, 16.

338 TL 2, 228, 230, 235-6; "... in Paul, though not in John, the term 'flesh' (sarx) shades over from the neutral – 'body' or, at least, 'earthly body' – to the sinful" (TL 2, 323).

339 TL 2, 298 n. 30.

340 TD 3, 159.

341 TD 3, 11, 159-64; TD 4, 240-1.
the flesh, until it becomes absolute in the cry of dereliction and then in the death on the cross.342

The same disparity accounts for his acute susceptibility to manifold temptations to preempt its terrible and inevitable outcome.343 His refusal to yield, his determination trustingly to wait upon the Father's good pleasure even as his own resources are increasingly depleted, constitutes his peculiarly human freedom as obedience.344

His distinctively human agency, his willing consent to the Father and therefore to his mission, is especially evident in his faith345 and prayer.346 In both, he abandons himself utterly to the Father for the fulfillment of his mission, along the way and at its end. Equally, in both he receives ever anew his personal responsibility for its execution, in the moment and to the last. By virtue of his faithful freedom and prayerful

342 “The decisive final stage is not within the Son's power at all ...” (TD 3, 170, see also, 159-161, 181; TL 2, 325).

343 TD 3, 162; TL 2, 230, 235-6, 294-5.

344 TD 3, 160.

345 Balthasar notes the "qualitative difference between his faith and ours" even as he acknowledges, "the Letter to the Hebrews (12:2) does not hesitate to describe this total surrender to his mission and to the One who sends him as exemplary faith" (TD 3, 170-1). The difference is that "we only receive our mission on the basis of our coming to faith, whereas Jesus always has and is his mission. Insofar as he does not know (and does not wish to know) the paths God sets before him for the fulfillment of his mission, but has the certainty that the Father will bring it to its conclusion, we can apply to him the definition of faith (Heb 11:1)” (ibid., 171). See also, "Fides Christi: An Essay on the Consciousness of Christ” in Explorations in Theology 2: Spouse of the Word, trans. John Saward [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991], 43-79.

346 TD 3, 169-72; TL 2, 246; TD 2, 298.
obedience, his human activity is marked by an "obedient letting-things-happen" that is "an active consent, [a] deliberate action".\(^\text{347}\)

Ignorance and temptation do not exhaust the unfreedom in which Jesus exists. He was "under the 'curse' (Gal 3.13), 'made to be sin for us' (2 Cor 5.21)'\(^\text{348}\). The command of the Father is that he should willingly give his life for the world. This is the heart of the message that he both speaks and enacts. His whole life is preparation for the hour of "this giving up, his 'death for'".\(^\text{349}\)

Jesus’ career (from birth to death) falls into two parts.\(^\text{350}\) The first and much the longer stretches from the womb to the upper room. The second, the hour of his passion, takes him from garden to tomb, and is the goal and climactic crisis of his mission.\(^\text{351}\) The difference between the two is especially at the level of personal agency, the critical "caesura" being the agony and arrest in Gethsemane.\(^\text{352}\) Hitherto, Jesus has lived his life by his own initiative. Now, he looses charge of his mission and is handed

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\(^{347}\) \textit{TD} 4, 241. "His human will has limits just as does his human nature as a whole, and he will constantly have to take care – not least through his prayer – to ensure that this limited will continually finds its place at the center of the unlimited will of his Father" (\textit{TL} 2, 286).

\(^{348}\) \textit{TD} 2, 408; cf., \textit{TD} 4, 248; \textit{TL} 2, 337.

\(^{349}\) \textit{TL} 2, 299-300; cf., \textit{Mysterium} 89-94.

\(^{350}\) I say "from birth to death" because these two parts are not Jesus' whole story. "Jesus' life, directed to the hour as its final goal, his Passion, and his Resurrection are like the three syllables of a single word that are meaningful only if they are pronounced together" (\textit{TL} 2, 300; cf., \textit{TD} 4, 238). That being said, I am following Balthasar’s example in treating the first two syllables in relative isolation from the third.

\(^{351}\) "This is his mission's center of gravity, his ordeal by fire" (\textit{TD} 4, 234). "It is as if he is 'saved up' for this hour and hence protected against any premature action" (ibid., 235). See the whole passage, ibid., 231-7; also, \textit{TD} 3, 109-22.

\(^{352}\) \textit{TD} 4, 231. also, 235-7, 334-5, 383. In John, the transition is "the scene in the Temple that ... replaces the scene in Gethsemane ... (12.23, 27)" (ibid., 236).
over ("by men, by Christians, Jews and Gentiles, and finally by the Father too") to judgment – where human wisdom and power no longer avail.\textsuperscript{353}

And yet, because of Gethsemane, Jesus' "seemingly passive letting-things happen" is a "(supra-active) passivity", even a "super action".\textsuperscript{354} It must be so. The mission of Jesus entails that he change places with God's faithless human covenant partner, thereby rendering himself disobedient humanity's willing representative, to become the object of God's righteous judgment.\textsuperscript{355} It is especially these motifs of exchange and representation that are together the christological engine of Balthasar's soteriology.\textsuperscript{356} In both cases he presses beyond the self-imposed limits of the Fathers and the formalism of Luther. The specifics of his surpassing them clarifies what he means by Jesus' supra-active passivity and why it is the christological heart of the gospel.

\textsuperscript{353} \textit{TD} 3, 226; cf., \textit{TD} 4, 237.

\textsuperscript{354} \textit{TD} 4, 231, 237.

\textsuperscript{355} \textit{TD} 2, 408; \textit{TD} 4, 334.

\textsuperscript{356} I say this not unmindful of Balthasar's determination to hold onto the five "main features of atonement in the New Testament" in the face of three dangers that must be avoided: "(1) No aspect must be allowed to dominate and so diminish the significance of the others. (2) The full content of the central assertion (which is the goal of all five aspects) may not be replaced by some alleged equivalent that is more 'intelligible' to the spirit of a different epoch but in fact lacks the center of gravity of the biblical assertion. (3) The tension that exists between two aspects must not be slackened, let alone dissolved, in the interests of an illusory synthesis: rather it must be endured" (\textit{TD} 4, 243; Balthasar provides instances of each danger, see ibid., 244).

Nonetheless, the first two of the "five aspects", Jesus' representative self-surrender and the \textit{admirabile commercium}, are the more strictly christological dimensions of atonement, and as such, its christological engine. The third and fourth aspects, liberation and participation, describe "the fruit of the reconciliation event" (\textit{TD} 4, 242). The fifth describes the trinitarian love of God that is the "primary source" of "the entire reconciliation process" (\textit{TD} 4, 243). The particular focus of my thesis entails my attending primarily to the first and second aspects, also to a lesser extent the fifth, while neglecting almost entirely the third and fourth.
Luther's exchange takes insufficient cognisance of the history of Jesus and the obedience manifest therein.\(^{357}\) The exchange has a history that stretches from the Virgin's womb to the cross and the empty tomb. Jesus takes rebel humanity's place and is effectively representative in the concrete particularities of his human existence.\(^{358}\) For our benefit, but more, in our place, Jesus takes upon himself "the personal and social situation of the sinner", prone to ignorance, temptation, and suffering from the beginning.\(^{359}\) As Hebrews puts it, he learns obedience through what he suffers with loud cries and tears.\(^{360}\) The exchange is not as for Luther an abstract transaction. It is achieved "from within", "from inside", and even "from underneath".\(^{361}\) It is this that constitutes the fullness of Christ's representative role, the willing \textit{pro nobis} that expounds his history (there is no more essential or original description of him),\(^{362}\) rendering it the redemptive reconciliation of the world.\(^{363}\)

\(^{357}\) Balthasar's lengthy and critical conversations with Luther are to be found at \textit{TD} 4, 284-90; \textit{TL} 2, 335-53 (see also, \textit{Mysterium} 52-4, 61-3, 139-40). I say, critical; and they are. But (pace Thomas G. Dalzell, \textit{The Dramatic Encounter of Divine and Human Freedom in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar}. [Bern: Peter Lang, 1997], 144) there is also a fascination with Luther that provokes Balthasar's own comparable determination not to compromise the radical realism of the New Testament \textit{theologia crucis}. E.g., "It is as if Luther's thought, right from its very beginnings, was bent upon filling precisely the gap that patristic theology had left open in the \textit{admirabile commercium}. His Christology follows the doctrine of the \textit{pro nobis} to its ultimate, exclusive conclusion, and here it is understood as an exchange ... but no longer an exchange of divine and creaturely nature .... Now the exchange is between the sinner and Christ, the bringer of grace. No one could take 2 Cor 5.21 more literally ..." (\textit{TD} 4, 284).

\(^{358}\) \textit{TD} 3, 243; \textit{TD} 4, 248-9; \textit{TL} 2, 314.

\(^{359}\) \textit{TD} 4, 241, 247.

\(^{360}\) \textit{TL} 2, 285, 295-6.

\(^{361}\) \textit{TD} 3, 240-1; \textit{TL} 2, 295-6, 324, 344-5.

\(^{362}\) "It [the \textit{pro nobis}] unlocks not only all Christology but the entire trinitarian doctrine of God that flows from it, as well as the doctrine of the Church .... The \textit{pro nobis} contains the innermost core of the interplay between God and man, the center of all theodrama" (\textit{TD} 4, 239).

\(^{363}\) \textit{TD} 3, 244-5; \textit{TD} 4, 241.
Still more must be said before the extremity of the Pauline made-sin-under-the-curse is reached. The Fathers limited the exchange to sin's consequences and due punishment. These, they affirmed, Jesus uncompromisingly took upon himself. But, they stopped short of asserting that he assumed sin itself. Only that would have permitted them to achieve the radical realism of the New Testament. Jesus, as a man, participates in, and acts from within humanity's fallen condition. He possesses within himself "the worm in its entrails". And he lives and exercises his freedom in "mysterious communion" with the "free decisions and habits" of the rest of sinful humanity. Individual and social fallenness so determine his activity that he is willingly obedient in spite of and over against the "deviance and darkening" that pervade even his human will. The freedom of his obedience is "the freedom of the 'flesh'", a properly human willing that constantly contradicts its own perverse inclinations.

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364 TD 4, 245, 250-5, 317, 381.

365 "Christ has assumed all the defectus of sinners" (Mysterium 164).

366 Mysterium 22; the worm is, "mortality, fallenness, self-estrangement, death - which sin introduced into the world" (ibid., 22).

367 TL 2, 293.

368 TL 2, 293; cf., Jesus "experience[d] in [him]self the inner perversion of a humankind that refuses any sort of service, any sort of respect, to God" (Hans Urs von Balthasar, Credo, trans. David Kipp [San Francisco: Ignatius Press under license from T&T Clark Ltd, 2000], 52 [hereafter cited as Credo]).

369 The instrumental construal of the relationship of Jesus' humanity to his divinity (Aristotle's "instrumentum animatum [ensouled instrument]", or Thomas' "organ' conjoined to the divinity [instrumentum conjunctum]") is insufficient to describe the sphere of activity proper to his distinctively human freedom, the freedom of the flesh exercised in obedience to the Father (TL 2, 291; cf., TD 4, 262-6). It is specifically the "inner contact between Jesus and the reality of sin as such" that is "lack[ing]" in Thomas ("as in Anselm") (ibid., 263; for Anselm, ibid., 255-60).
And yet, the salvation of the world will not be achieved by the human obedience, the moral and spiritual perfection, of Jesus. His virtue does not accumulate a deposit of merit that compensates for and cancels (makes satisfaction for) the sin of the world. Here the chasm between Jesus' life and the hour of darkness ("with its special discontinuous content") is of crucial significance. Until Gethsemane, Jesus "accepted unreservedly every gift from the Father, including that of joy, of sociability, of being allowed to confer benefits". His constant anticipation of the hour of his suffering did not rob him of the light of life. He knew that his mission could not be fully realised within the limits of his human existence. Yet, neither could it be accomplished except in and through them. Nor was his human life unto death merely the present means to a future salvation not yet realised. The eschatological dimension of his existence was in him so that all along the way from Jordan to Golgotha, with authority he granted to men and women present participation in the salvation of God, demonstrating the pro nobis of his redemptive solidarity with humanity.

370 “It is a mistake to speak of Christ's work on our behalf as something removed from the darkness of sin, something that overthrows sin through pure merit. This is the idea of the 'undeserved', perfect death of Jesus as put forward by Anselm and K. Rahner” (TD 4, 336, cf., 260-1).

371 TD 4, 383. “Today it may be that an 'incarnational' tendency is trying to obliterate the borderline between the life and the Passion; this calls for renewed attention to be devoted to the Passion's inherent modalities” (ibid., 238). Balthasar's "today" stretches back at least to "a certain kind of Protestant Christology (from Schleiermacher to Hofmann and Ritschl) that sees the Cross merely as the ultimate consequence of Jesus' 'faithfulness to his vocation'” (ibid., 231 n. 1; for further critical conversation with Schleiermacher see TD 3, 61-2, 72-5).

372 Credo 52.

373 Credo 52. Balthasar therefore rejects (though, "rejection of this theory must be tempered by care ...") the idea of “the French School” (Thomas Leonardi OP, et. al.) for whom "the whole existence of Jesus was, from the start, interiorly identical with the Cross" (Mysterium 93-4).

374 TD 3, 11, 160-6; TD 4, 240-1; TL 2, 244-5.

375 TD 3, 160-1, 166, 180; TD 4, 233-4.
From Gethsemane on, that light and liberty are taken from him. The "hour and power of darkness' (Luke 22.53) ... is ... an unfathomable night", a night that takes him beyond the extreme reach of what is humanly achievable. It is the heart of the gospel mystery, where the human capacity for conceptual comprehension is pressed to its limits. The Scylla of a final synthesis and the Charybdis of absolute paradox and contradiction are to be avoided.

376 *Credo* 52.

377 "... where human power no longer avails" (*TD* 3, 226).

An extended discussion, under the headings, "Freedom Liberated" and "The Paradox of Christian Discipleship" (*TD* 4, 367-88), includes a critical conversation with Pelagius (374-80), and in particular his insistence that "God's activity as Creator and his redemptive cura constitute 'one operation'" (376). Over against this "monism [of grace]" Balthasar sets Augustine's "dualism of grace" (observing in passing that "it is quite wrong to say that there was not dualism before Augustine", pace G. Greshake and Harnack). The caesura of Gethsemane and the supra-active passivity of Jesus, which it inaugurates, set Jesus' whole incarnate existence in a uniquely redemptive mode. Accordingly, he cannot be "primarily the exemplum" even if, as for Pelagius, he is that "not in a purely external sense, but in the way a significant model is able powerfully to transform our inner orientation toward God" (377). Created human freedom is redeemed only on the other side of the exhaustion of its capacities, in those around Jesus but also in himself. The redemption of humanity's freedom is "man's liberation through the Cross, that is, everything we mean by 'ransom', 'redemption', liberation' from the powers of sin, of the world, of death, of the demonic; and ... the liberated man's initiation into the trinitarian life of God ..." (367). Which is not to say that the category, exemplum, may not properly be applied to Jesus (378-80).

378 Though not to incomprehensible stammering or sheer silence. Rather, is it pressed with "ecclesial faith" to creative dependence upon the "canonical Scriptures" which "through the Holy Spirit" are "sufficient to form an adequate basis for theological reflection down through all the centuries, providing that such reflection sees the individual text in the context of the whole, expressed by the totality of Scripture [including 'the plurality of New Testament theologies' representing the 'variety of complementary perspectives' required if we are to 'approach [the] multidimensional human life' of the 'Word-made-man']" (*TD* 3, 143-8). The totality of Scripture includes also "all the main themes of election in the Old Covenant ... Old and New Covenants belong together; this means that later atonement theology will not be able to jettison parts of this vocabulary without suffering harm and impoverishment ..." (*TD* 4, 240).

379 Cf., Balthasar's approval of von Speyr who he says, "evidences ... the various aspects of the mystery ... [but] lays no claim to offer a final synthesis" (*TL* 2, 289). Hegel's is the paradigm of the final synthesis, the "absolute system" (ibid., 364): "Interpreted in Christian terms, what Hegel understands as 'truth' would be a God who gains himself only through the principle of the demonic, understood as the 'awful
Jesus is burdened with the world’s No to divine love. That No is loaded on to him by the world itself in its darkness. He is totally overwhelmed by it. The passive voice reflects the essential passivity of Jesus during his passion and supremely of course in death. Equally, nothing would be achieved if he had not been both willing and able to receive it. So we must speak of the same in the active voice. The hour is integral to his mission and he affirms it from the beginning. When it is upon him he deliberately appropriates within himself humanity’s hostility to God, "that darkness of alienation from God" that is occasioned by the sinner’s No.\footnote{TD 4, 334-5.}

The use of the active voice to describe Jesus during the Passion must be qualified. It cannot be his will to appear before the Father bearing within him the No of rebel humanity. His will is only to do, to affirm, the Father’s will. He is caught therefore in the midst of a dual and contradictory solidarity. In obedience to the Father ("solidary \textit{[solidarisch]}" with the Father) he refuses not to keep faith with a faithless power of the negative’’ (ibid., 321). In this respect, Balthasar is critical of the Hegelianism of Rahner and Moltmann (\textit{TD} 4, 320-3).

\footnote{Balthasar has in mind especially what Althusius calls Luther’s "paradox Christology": "What is really happening here ... is the suspension of the principle of noncontradiction" (\textit{TL} 2, 336; cf., \textit{TD} 4, 287-9). In a lengthy footnote Balthasar charts the inner connection between Luther and Hegel (\textit{TL} 2, 336 n. 32).

The suspension of the principle of noncontradiction is not however the heart of Balthasar's quarrel with Luther (and Kierkegaard) but only an indicative symptom, as the following makes clear: "But if it is true that in Luther's \textit{sub contrario} the 'absolute paradox' (of Kierkegaard) comes to expression, there can be, nonetheless, no resting with this static form of expression. The paradoxical formulation has, rather, an inner dynamism that manifests itself in purposiveness (became poor, so that you might become rich). This finality kindles a light in the darkness of rational incomprehensibility. This light is the light of love, and it is by love's logic that Paul draws the conclusion (\textit{krinantas}) we have been discussing [namely, that 'the universality of the second affirmation' -- \textit{therefore all have died} -- 'cannot be detached from the singularity of the first' -- \textit{One has died for all} (2 Cor 5.14)] .... There is, of course, no question here of a 'formal logic'; what is involved is a logic whose content is the uniqueness and personality of the eternal Logos become man, a logic created by him and identical with him. And this unique efficaciousness belongs with the 'scandal' and must not be 'watered down' or 'emptied out'. Of any other logic than this, the New Testament knows nothing" (\textit{Mysterium} 54).}
world ("solidary" with rebel humanity). As their despised representative he identifies himself with them in their disobedience, appears before the Father bearing the world's No, and "divert[s] onto himself all the anger of God at the world's faithlessness".

"What is 'experienced' is the opposite of what the facts indicate". The facts are as just described: Jesus' unwavering and representative identification with humanity in its disobedience accords with the will of God. However, so profound is his solidarity with the world's No that the equation – identification with the world's No enacts his Yes to the Father's will – is beyond him. In the darkness of his Passion he must endure it as sheer contradiction, beyond his capacity to overcome or harmonise in a higher synthesis: "it is, not one truth, but two, which remain standing side by side ... an unconquerable dialectic". Suffering the infinite contradiction, he measures the truth.

382 _TD_ 4, 348; cf., _Mysterium_ 137, 138.

383 _TD_ 4, 335-6.

384 "He identifies himself with all that is anti-God in the world, as it were, with the second chaos, brought about by man in his freedom" (_TD_ 2, 408).

385 "If Christ has suffered, not only for the elect but for all human beings, he has by this very fact assumed their eschatological 'No' in regard to the event of salvation which came about in him" (_Mysterium_ 172).

386 _TD_ 4, 343, cf., 345; _TL_ 2, 319. See Balthasar's extended discussion of how Christ's sufferings are properly describable as the "punishment" and "wrath" of God (_TD_ 4, 337-51).

387 _TD_ 4, 336.

388 _TD_ 4, 349.

389 _TL_ 2, 325. Sin must be judged "in a dying and a death that cut the judged man off from the living God" (_TD_ 2, 408; cf., _Credo_ 46).
His obedience is his having surrendered himself to suffering the severity of that dialectic which runs right through him. He exhibits the offended love of God that is the *effect* of the world's sin and, bearing within him humanity's No, he is the *cause* of that offence. It is the eschatological confrontation of light and darkness, of the love of God and human hatred.\(^{390}\) There being no common ground between them, and each itself being groundless, there is nowhere for Jesus to take his stand, no occasion for him to act.\(^{391}\) He has surrendered himself to the *krisis* and continues to do so to the very end, even as the theodramatic rationale for his obedience is increasingly obscured, ringing from him the unanswerably desolate question, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachtani?* The Father's will had been the light of his life, constitutive of his very identity as a human person. Now, in the hour of judgment, in the brutal facts of his passion, it is represented to him only as rigid and pitiless command.\(^{392}\) Utterly overwhelmed, his energies exhausted, he is borne ineluctably and inexorably into the ultimate darkness of death and hell.\(^{393}\)

And yet, his life ordered entirely to this end, his self-abandonment from the garden to the cry of dereliction and self-committal to the Father testifies to a mysterious activity, a hidden freedom of unimaginable scale that fills even his passion and marks it the apex of his willing obedience.\(^{394}\) Though, that activity is finally

\(^{390}\) *TD* 4, 343; *TL* 2, 325.

\(^{391}\) *TD* 4, 338, 349.

\(^{392}\) *TD* 3, 188, 226.

\(^{393}\) *TD* 3, 162, 336; *TD* 4, 335; *Mysterium* 109.

\(^{394}\) “Since the Son receives no further answer [to 'his "Why"? to God'] from the Father, everything must seem to him purely vain and senseless, even his absolute obedience ('into your hands ...'), by which, without having a synthetic vision of what he is doing, he withstands in himself the contradiction of sin
mysterious even to Jesus. Only the vindication of the resurrection will bring it to light. Indeed, that same mysteriously supra-active passivity will play its part there too, Jesus himself, with the Father and the Spirit, being properly said to have had a share in bringing it about.

In the meantime, as the one who has depended (sich verlassen) entirely on the Father, now "identified with his brothers in their lostness", he is forsaken (verlassen) by the Father. His mission all for naught (vergebens), it remains for him but to endure absolute futility (Vergeblichkeit). All possibility of human achievement, even by the incarnate Son, has long gone. Only at the end of absolute futility in a primal act of creativity can and does the light of forgiveness (Vergebung) break forth. For, "forgiveness does not come as a return for some achievement: it comes because any such achievement was impossible".

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395 Credo 52-4.

396 "We must stress this sovereign freedom on the part of the risen man Jesus Christ, since it is the revelation of that hidden freedom that is expressed in his total obedience to the Father, a freedom that is not only divine but also human" (TD 4, 364; see whole section, "The Risen and Crucified One", ibid., 361-7).

397 Credo 58.

398 TD 4, 349.

399 TD 4, 349, cf., 356, 357, 360; TD 3, 345; TL 2, 326.

For an account of Balthasar’s description of Mary, and not Jesus, as the prototypical human covenant partner, see Appendix 1, “The Mater Dolorosa: Christ’s Female Counterpart”. 
The Kenosis of the Son: Summary

I promised to return to Balthasar’s more comprehensive application of kenosis, encompassing the activity of the triune God *ad intra* and *ad extra*. I do so now in a brief five point summary.

In the first place, the kenosis affirms that Jesus is the Second Person of the Trinity. It is none other than the Son and Word of God who undertakes, enacts, and completes his mission in the world, in time, in obedience to the Father, in the power of the Spirit, in complete identification with rebellious humanity, and in undergoing the terrible judgment of God. God, the incarnate Son of God, is the individual man, Jesus. The Son of God is "made sin", is the object of God’s graceless No, dies, is buried, and is damned.400 There is absolutely nothing in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus that does not belong to, as ingredient in the very identity of, God, the Son of God.

Secondly, there is nothing in the deity of the Son that obviates his becoming human, being made sin, dying, and being damned. On the contrary, it is precisely his deity, and more specifically his divine personhood as the Son of the Father, that uniquely qualifies him for his temporal mission.401 The triune being of God, the

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400 “… the suffering Christ lives this movement of being *finally rejected* (recall the millstone hurled into the sea in Revelation 18.21) …” (*TL* 2, 326, italics added).

God’s “graceless No” (*TD* 4, 349) is a deliberatively provocative phrase: by itself registering God’s absolute rejection of humanity’s resistance to God. The phrase anticipates Adrienne von Speyer’s description of the outer darkness into which (in the person of Christ crucified) “God-hostile flesh” is cast, as “waste incineration” (*TL* 2, 326). That being said, the gracelessness of the No is not unqualified: it is contained within the graceful Yes of God which is concretely the Son’s taking “upon himself this God-hostile flesh … *out of obedience to God*, thereby neutralizing this hostility from underneath, as it were” (ibid., italics added). This may go some way to explaining the force of the phrase in its original context: “In himself … he [the Son] experiences, not their [humanity’s] sin, but the hopelessness of their resistance to God and the graceless No of divine grace to this resistance” (*TD* 4, 349).

401 “Only because he is God can he empty himself” (*TD* 2, 268).
homoousios of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and therefore God's activity ad intra and ad extra, is consistently kenotic.\textsuperscript{402} Jesus' divine personhood as such therefore, and more particularly his \textit{topos}, his absolute distinction from the Father within the Trinity,\textsuperscript{403} sustains him through the shattering and infinitely kenotic contradiction of the cross.\textsuperscript{404}

Thirdly, the uniqueness of the second Person, and therefore his unique qualification for the kenosis of his incarnation, is his original readiness for obedience which distinguishes him from the Father and the Spirit.\textsuperscript{405} The obedience of Jesus in carrying out his mission in time is continuous with, expressive of, and a function of his eternal responsiveness to the Father.\textsuperscript{406}

\textsuperscript{402} In \textit{TD} 4, 328-32, esp. 331, Balthasar describes the "primal kenosis" of the "self-expropriation" [cf., 'self-destitution' (\textit{Mysterium} viii)] of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which "makes possible all other kenotic movements of God into the world ... [as] its consequences". There are three consequences: "the first 'self-limitation' [\textit{ad extra}] of the triune God arises through his endowing his creatures with freedom"; "the second, deeper, 'limitation' ... as a result of the ['indissoluble'] covenant"; and "the third kenosis ... not only christological but involv[ing] the whole Trinity ... [which] arises through the Incarnation of the Son alone ..." (ibid., 331; cf., \textit{Mysterium} vii-ix, 35, 208).

The consistently kenotic activity of God, \textit{ad intra} and \textit{ad extra}, must not however be taken to imply that "God's essence becomes itself (univocally) 'kenotic', such that a single concept could include both the divine foundation of the possibility of Kenosis, and the Kenosis itself" (\textit{Mysterium} 29). The kenosis is always and only "identified ... with the divine \textit{freedom}, over against every way of thinking that would posit here a process of a natural (Gnostic) or logical (Hegelian) character" (ibid., 34; cf., Hans Urs von Balthasar, \textit{The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics}, vol. 7, \textit{Theology: The New Covenant}, trans. Brian McNeil C.R.V. [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989], 214-15 [hereafter cited as \textit{GL 7}]).

\textsuperscript{403} \textit{TD} 4, 333, 334; \textit{Mysterium} ix.

\textsuperscript{404} "[The] trinitarian mystery ... is the only 'theological dialectic' and, at the same time, its surpassing, because the \textit{dia} that cleaves in two passes right through the center of the Logos, who remains and endures in obedience" (\textit{TL} 2, 326); "... the union between Father and Son ... is held fast through every darkness and forsakenness" (Hans Urs von Balthasar, \textit{Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory}, vol. 5, \textit{The Last Act}, trans. Graham Harrison [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998], 261 [hereafter cited as \textit{TD} 5]; cf., \textit{TD} 4, 349-51; also, \textit{Mysterium} 203).

\textsuperscript{405} This in contrast to "a Nestorian Christology which we might today describe as a 'dynamic and transcendential anthropology', according to which the mission of Jesus "start[s] out from the 'open' structure of man's transcendence, [rather than] from God's self-abnegation, and the Love that stoops down" (\textit{Mysterium} 25).
In what then, fourthly, does the Son's kenosis consist? What is it of which he empties himself (Phil 2.7)? Balthasar answers by engaging the classical doctrine of the two status. Eternally, in the status exaltationis, the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the activity of the Son; but during the time of his incarnate existence, in the status exinanitio, the Son surrenders himself in the trinitarian inversion to being led by the Father through the activity of the Spirit. Expressed differently, the Son deposits or lays up with the Father the glory of the infinite freedom of the triune will (“his divine power of self-disposal”) in order to enact his identity within the restraints of finite freedom.

Determined not to "degenerate into theopaschism", Balthasar is equally committed to the kenosis as a "real event" in which "the pre-mundane Logos" is involved. In the status exinanitio, from virgin-conception through the descent into hell, it is the divine Word who suffers. This is where the "controversial "Theopaschist

406 Mysterium 91, 105; TD 4, 349-50.

407 The two status are the theodramatic correspondents to the two natures of classical christology: the Chalcedonian adverbs, specifically, "asynchytos, achoristos; 'without confusion', 'without separation'", apply here too (Mysterium 208).

408 TD 3, 189.

409 Mysterium 90-1, cf., 24-5; also, TD 3, 228; Credo 46. This "depositing" is not the removal of what would otherwise stand in the way of his status exinanitio. On the contrary, "He can, so to say, let himself renounce his glory. He is so divinely free that he can bind himself to the obedience of a slave" (Mysterium 28). The image of depositing and laying up comes to Balthasar from Adrienne von Speyr (TD 5, 259, 263; TL 2, 288; though see TD 3, 228).

410 Mysterium 25. "The Trinity does not hover 'unmoved' above the events of the Cross (the view that Christ is somehow 'above' his abandonment by God and continues to enjoy the beatific vision), nor does it get entangled in sin as in a process theology à la Moltmann or Hegel, becoming part of a mythology or cosmic tragedy" (TD 4, 333).
formula" has its proper place. The Son makes the agony (even to Godforsakenness) of the passion "his own". Suffering is not therefore foreign to God, something that does not affect him, that remains external to him. Indeed, given that the Son’s missio is continuous with his processio, "it must be something profoundly appropriate to his divine Person" (TD 3, 226).

While the exchange of status is real, yet the status exaltationis is never lost to the incarnate Son, even if from below "it is not existentially accessible to him". In his life understood as preparation for his hour, the glory breaks through from time to time, archetypically in the transfiguration, but also in the authority with which he conducts himself and bestows blessing. A concrete paradigm of the inseparable yet unconfused relation between the status in Jesus is to be found in his obedience in speech. Eternally, he is the glorious Word of God. Incarnate he is that same Word, but he speaks as "the One-who-hears", speaking not his own word but as the word of the Father who sent him. From the beginning his speech is provocative. He contradicts

411 The formula reads, "One of the Trinity has suffered". It "can already be found in Gregory Nazianzen ... and the twelfth of Cyril’s condemnations put it in an almost provocative way: 'If any one does not confess that the Word of God suffered in the flesh and was crucified in the flesh and in the flesh tasted death and became the first-born from among the dead ... anathema sit' (DS 262)" (TD 3, 226).

412 TD 3, 226.

413 In what is a combination of paraphrase and quotation from Adrienne von Speyr, Balthasar offers an extended and provocative reflection on this theme at TD 5, 247-69. Though often critical of Moltmann, Balthasar approves his having provided the pro nobis with "considerably more theological foundation [than Pannenberg]" (TD 4, 295). "Protestant polemics [against 'an impassable God'] is directed, not against the natural knowledge of God, but against a picture of God understood as apatheia along the lines of the ancient world, which is then elevated into a norm for Christianity. Moltmann is right to protest against this ..." (ibid., 295 n. 41).

414 TD 3, 161; "... maintaining the union of his two status was not his business" (ibid., 162).

415 TD 3, 160-1.

416 TD 3, 230 n. 68.
and is contradicted. Yet, he never speaks except in order to be understood. Speaking to those who, resistant to God’s word, will not listen, his speech “fractures into dialectic”, contradicting their contradictoriness. Yet, if their contradiction betrays their godlessness, his offers evidence only of his enduring solidarity with the godless. The contradiction is not in him but is occasioned by “the mutual incomprehension of the language of the incarnate Word and the language of the flesh”. In the end he is reduced to silence, the silence not of the listener but of the silenced, the dead, the damned.

Lastly (in this five point summary of the Son’s kenosis), in the resurrection Jesus is restored to the *status exaltationis*, but without leaving behind the *status exinanitio*. More than that, the risen Jesus illuminates their inseparability even in the darkest moments of his humiliation. There too in lowliness and abject obedience he was and is the sovereign Lord, and that not in spite of himself, especially not in spite of his

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417 TL 2, 238.

418 TL 2, 237-8, 325.

419 TL 2, 236, cf., 71, 234. The contradiction is not in him. And yet "Jesus, too, speaks the language of the flesh ... the full wealth of the 'language of the flesh'" (TL 2, 248, see whole section, "The Language of the Flesh", 248-275).

The “incomprehension” of the Word with respect to the language of the flesh would seem to denote the Word’s uncompromising opposition to the godless rebelliousness of the flesh; albeit, an opposition that, as we have just seen, derives from the Word’s enduring solidarity with the godless: “O what a good and profitable opponent” (ibid., 236, quoting Augustine, *Sermo* 109, 3, 3 [PL 38, 637]).

420 TL 2, 247, 279, 347, 352; TD 4, 358-9.

421 This is especially evident in "Johannine theology, which indeed sees each *status* reflected in the other, albeit without simply equating them and without forgetting that, in the former *status*, the concept of the Father *sending* the Son remains dominant" (TD 3, 178).
humanity, but precisely "within our shared humanity" and in the exercise of our shared human activity. 422 Silenced in death he was and is the Father's silent Word. 423

The revelation of the co-inherence of the two status demands a "decisive turn-about in the way of seeing God". 424 Humiliated and powerless, Jesus manifests the sovereign omnipotence of God. 425 Under God's wrath and judgment, he seals God's final covenant with humanity. 426 Led to the slaughter and opening not his mouth, he is "the loudest tidings of the Father". 427 Bound and defeated, he exercises the victorious freedom of God – so that John can ascribe to him the power not only to give his life but himself to take it up again (John 2.19; 10.18). 428 The absolute freedom granted by the Father to the risen Christ is no new freedom but is continuous with the supra-active passivity that took him, in obedience to the Father, to the Cross and beyond. 429 "The

422 TL 2, 69. "We see, then, that the total otherness of the man Jesus with respect to all other human beings (whom he calls his brothers only on the day of Easter [John 20.17]) must be interpreted as a total otherness within a perfect equality of human nature .... The very difference ['between divinity and humanity '] has in truth passed entirely into the 'language' of his humanity" – a language that (as Maximus has taught us) includes the "active operation" and "free consent" of his "human will ... even in his kenosis" (ibid., 70).

423 TL 2, 347.

424 Mysterium 28.

425 Mysterium 33-4; "... it is a mark of infinite freedom that it does not use force" (TD 2, 216).

426 TD 2, 253; TD 4, 241.

427 TL 2, 72.

428 Mysterium 34, 208

429 Mysterium 208-9. "In this sense [as 'the Son who, obedient to his mission, is led by the Father ... into the state of existence of this (human) sin that remains'], the Son therefore contemplates his own work too in what is absolutely opposed to God, in an objective 'triumphal procession' (Col 2.15) that is as
paradox must be allowed to stand: in the undiminished humanity of Jesus, the whole power and glory of God are made present to us”.\footnote{Mysterium 33. "... God in his majesty is the eternally 'humble'. God himself in his eternal ascent – ascendit Deus – is eternal abasement, eternal descent – quia et descendit primum" (Explorations in Theology, vol. 1, The Word Made Flesh, trans. A. V. Littledale and Alexander Dru [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989] 92). See also, \textit{TD} 4, 333; \textit{TL} 2, 67-68, 344.}

Easter, then, discloses to faith the mystery of the kenotic freedom of the incarnate Son.\footnote{TD 3, 59.} His renunciation of the glory of God and assumption of the servitude of fallen humanity entails no alienation within either the triune life of God or his own personal identity.\footnote{Mysterium 208. "Without under-estimating the depth to which God stooped down in Christ, but perceiving that this 'supreme' abasement (John 13.1) formed, with the exaltation, one single reality, for the two movements express the self-same divine love, John was able to apply to both the categories of 'exaltation' and 'glorification': yet in a way which is, (to use the language of the Chalcedonian Definition) asynchytos, achoristos; 'without confusion', 'without separation' (DS 302)" (ibid., 208; in a footnote [ibid., 272 n. 79] Balthasar quotes with approval Karl Barth, \textit{Kirchliche Dogmatik} 4/1, 203 [E.T., \textit{CD}4/1, 186]).}  

The Non-competitive Relation of Divine and Human Agencies in Christ

Balthasar defines the non-competitive relation between Christ's divine and human agencies in terms of a particular account of the \textit{analogia entis}. According to Lateran IV, "... between creator and creature there can be noted no similarity so great that a greater far remote as possible from any sentiment of victory. It is 'glory' in the uttermost opposite of 'glory', because it is at the same time blind obedience ...” \textit{(GL} 7, 233).
dissimilarity cannot be seen between them." In other words, an insurmountable chasm delineates creator and creature. There is no more generic concept (as, for example, 'being as such') to which the terms of the analogy can be traced back. Nor is there a higher synthesis into which their difference might be resolved.

Not even the hypostatic union overcomes it: neither the doctrine of grace nor the communicatio idiomatum abolishes the difference; more profoundly still, the Logos himself, in uniting human nature to his divine person, does not overcome their essential dissimilitudo. The analogia entis runs right through him. Indeed, he is "the 'concrete analogia entis' itself", constituting in himself the "final proportion" between God and created nature.

It is this christological concentration that will not permit Balthasar to follow Przywara in his exaggerated interpretation of the (unrevised) conciliar formula.

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434 TD 3, 220-1.

435 Balthasar takes note of the insufficiency of Thomist and neo-Thomist explanations in this regard (TD 3, 228 n. 68).

436 "It is only possible to apply qualities and attributes of the one nature to the other because both are united in the one person of the Logos – not by way of nature, but by way of the person" (TD 3, 222).

437 TD 3, 221-2, cf., 203; TD 2, 407; TD 4, 383. Balthasar suggests his understanding of the analogia entis may be relatively consistent with what Barth describes as "an analogy of (abiding) relationship", according to which, "... as man, in order to be man, must necessarily relate to his fellow man, God, in order to be God, must relate to himself in a trinitarian way [analogia proportionalitatis]" (TD 2, 321). Balthasar uses the phrase, analogia entis, only to make explicit what is at least implicit in Barth, that the relational analogy is 'real': "Since it is a case of uncreated and created reality, it is hard to see how the expression analogia entis could be avoided here; ... even according to this [Barth's] relational definition, it is still a case of reality, ens" (ibid., 321; for an earlier and lengthier [and relatively sympathetic] discussion of Barth and the analogia entis, see, Hans Urs von Balthasar, The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation, trans. Edward T. Oakes, SJ [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992], 161-7, 382-5).
(Lateran IV) with its necessary insistence on the essentially oppositional relation between divine and created.\textsuperscript{438} Without compromising the \textit{dissimilitudo}, a sufficient exposition of the hypostatic union requires that the \textit{similitudo} be given equal weight.

In what then does the \textit{similitudo} consist? Neither a "single being" (esse), nor "uncreated/created grace", nor "divinization" offer a sufficient answer.\textsuperscript{439} Instead, we must look to the \textit{imago Dei}. In terms of divine and human agency, the \textit{imago} is the human creature's finite freedom (autonomously theonomous and theonomously autonomous), the gift of the infinitely free God.\textsuperscript{440} Of course, image and archetype are not related \textit{aequivoce}.\textsuperscript{441} God created human beings for Godself, that they might willingly (autonomously) seek their (theonomous) fulfillment in God. In the creaturely self-possession of the love that surrenders itself humanity is in the image of, and naturally oriented towards, the inalienably self-sufficient and absolutely self-surrendering love of the triune God.\textsuperscript{442}

The incommensurability of the \textit{dissimilitudo} is intensified by the Fall of Adam, so that the whole character of the \textit{analogia} is altered. Far from freely consenting to seek its fulfillment beyond itself in the One who had given it its freedom, humanity turned away from God and directed itself to self-fulfillment through self-seeking and

\textsuperscript{438} "After all, the incommensurable distance does not mean that the created world is alienated from its origin" (\textit{TD} 3, 229 n. 68). "... he [Przywara] interprets ['the \textit{maior dissimilitudo}] as meaning that God and the creature are related as \textit{allo pros allo} [one against the other] ... so that, in every possible approach ... the ever greater dissimilitude bursts open. The \textit{pros} is ultimately understood as an 'against'. It is hard to see how such an understanding of analogy can sustain a Christology" (\textit{TL} 2, 94-5 n. 16; cf., \textit{TD} 3, 220 n. 51).

\textsuperscript{439} \textit{TD} 3, 228-9 n. 68.

\textsuperscript{440} See whole section, \textit{TD} 2, 212-42, esp. 230, 242, and my earlier discussion of this material.

\textsuperscript{441} \textit{TD} 3, 222-3; \textit{TD} 5, 412.

\textsuperscript{442} \textit{TD} 2, 325-7; \textit{TD} 3, 222-3.
self-justification, thereby giving itself into the self-imposed servitude of the flesh.\textsuperscript{443} The \textit{imago} was profoundly obscured; finite freedom, startlingly perverted; but neither altogether annihilated.\textsuperscript{444}

In an earlier section I have discussed at length the assumption of not merely human nature, but fallen human nature by the incarnate Son. Shot through with the \textit{analogia entis} intensified by the self-imposed slavery of the flesh, he nonetheless from first to last enacted and revealed the properly mutual coinherence of finite and infinite freedom, human and divine agency.\textsuperscript{445} In his incarnate activity, specifically the peculiarly human decisions that constitute his human obedience of the Father through the Spirit, Jesus, the incarnate Son and Logos of God, liberated the human creature for the exercise of its original, God–given freedom.\textsuperscript{446}

The mystery of the noncompetitive union of the incommensurable divine and human agencies in Jesus Christ is the mystery of Jesus as the revelation at once of the fullness of God and the fullness of what it is to be human. The theodramatic key to that dual revelation is the mission of Jesus. It is in and through his single-minded determination to fulfil the Father's will that the man, Jesus, the incarnate Son, reveals God and the human. He does not reveal God \textit{ad libitum} but as impelled by his mission, according to which he neither speaks nor acts of himself but only in obedience to the Father's command through the Spirit. Neither does he reveal what it is to be human as a discrete task ("in order to exhibit himself"), but "concomitantly", solely on account of

\textsuperscript{443} The creaturely realm has become “the \textit{regio (peccaminosae) dissimilitudinis}” \textit{(TD 4, 381; cf., TL 2, 323–4)}.

\textsuperscript{444} \textit{TD 2, 320}, including n. 20; \textit{TD 4, 318}.

\textsuperscript{445} \textit{TL 2, 364}.

\textsuperscript{446} \textit{TD 2, 230, 238; TD 3, 258; TD 4, 381-2}. 
his utter preoccupation with doing the will of the Father.\textsuperscript{447} Simultaneously, he reveals and enacts God's unreserved Yes to his human covenant partner (and therefore the full truth of human existence as God sees and knows it) and also God's human covenant partner's "hold[ing] fast to this Yes that has been pronounced upon it".\textsuperscript{448}

The specifically human freedom in which Jesus undertakes and fulfills his mission is unconfusedly and inseparably (without transgressing the law of the \textit{analogia entis}\textsuperscript{449}) the sovereign freedom of the Son of God. Incarnate, the mode in which the Son of God is free is different from that of the Godhead. Yet his humanly free pursuit of his mission is the exact correlate of his eternal consent to being sent to be this human being.\textsuperscript{450}

\textsuperscript{447} \textit{TD} 3, 225; \textit{TL} 2, 318.

\textsuperscript{448} \textit{TD} 2, 254; \textit{TD} 3, 224-5; \textit{TL} 2, 321. "As man, Jesus, the 'holy one of God' (Mark 1.24; cf. Acts 3.14; Rev 3.7), so perfectly lives out his mission to complete in the Spirit the task given him by the Father ['to reveal God's essence and attitude toward man' (\textit{TD} 3, 225)] that he manifests in his sense-woven human existence not only God's solidarity with the sinner and the needy but all the other properties of God ['the mystery of God's essential properties', 'the fundamental properties that define God's inner essence'] as well" (\textit{TL} 2, 138-9; see the whole section, "The Essential Properties in the Light of the Hypostases", 138-49; also, \textit{Mysterium} 33).

\textsuperscript{449} "… measuring the immeasurable realm of the \textit{analogia entis} as he strides through it" (\textit{TD} 3, 227).

\textsuperscript{450} \textit{TD} 3, 227-8; \textit{TD} 4, 356; \textit{Mysterium} 209.
Gethsemane

The life of Jesus, from Bethlehem to Golgotha, is in two parts, Gethsemane being the caesura, the turning point, between them. Possessed of the autonomy ingredient in human freedom until Gethsemane, thereafter he becomes the plaything of his contemporaries and apparently the passive means to God’s fulfillment of his purpose for the world: he is “handed over”, “delivered into the hands of sinful men” according to “the definite plan and foreknowledge of God”. The transition from action to passion, from a self-disposing freedom to a passive being-at-the-disposal of others, is stark. So stark that, with his death and burial, the contrast – the contradiction and paradox – is absolute. The Lord and giver of life has become a lifeless corpse.

Accurate in so far as it goes, this account is insufficient, lacking the most essential element, disclosed in the “artfully constructed scene of the agony on the Mount of Olives”. If it is true that “the Christ was deliberately given over by the Father to a deadly destiny”, it is true to the New Testament witness only if it is “completed by reference to the active gift which Christ made of himself”.

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451 Balthasar’s most extensive treatment of Gethsemane is, Mysterium 100-12 (with 71-2, 123-4). I shall offer commentary on that text, supplemented with material from TD and TL. My exposition regularly calls on matter already discussed. I shall not repeat references that figured in those earlier discussions, including here for the most part only new references.

452 Mysterium 107, 109, with explicit reference to the “Passion predictions”, the “close of the scene on the Mount of Olives”, and Acts 2.23. See the whole section, “Surrender”, ibid., 107-12.

453 Mysterium 52. Balthasar distinguishes his use of absolute paradox from Kierkegaard’s which, as a “sheerly philosophical dialectic” and “static form of expression” lacks the “inner dynamism which manifests itself in purposiveness”, the “validity and efficacious power” that is “a function of absolute love” (ibid., 52-4).

454 Mysterium 71.

455 Mysterium 111, 112.
Whereas his self-gift is in the intra-trinitarian life his eternal self-offering to the Father and in the economy his whole existence from incarnation to ascension, it is dramatically and singularly epitomised in Gethsemane: singularly, because it is the decisive turning point; dramatically, by virtue of its proximity to the cross. In the garden he is led “in advance ... ‘right into the death’ which it represents by anticipation”.456

It is more than “an ordinary human death”,457 more too than a martyr’s death,458 neither of which could account for the “emptiness and abandonment” expressed in Jesus’ anguish in the garden and on the cross. Rather, it is “the second death” of God’s “definitive judgment”.459 Which is why it may not be treated as a moment in a series of moments which we either wait out until the scene changes,460 or resolve in a higher synthesis, a “comprehensive ‘analogy’ between the before and the after, the mortal Jesus and the risen Kyrios, earth and heaven”.461

456 Mysterium 72.

457 Mysterium 51.

458 Mysterium 106.

459 Mysterium 50, cf., 122-3; also, TD 4, 343; TL 2, 325.

460 Mysterium 50.

461 Mysterium 52.
In Gethsemane Jesus himself confronts the “tracklessness (aporia)” of the yawning abyss that opens up before him. So terrible is the prospect that he pleads with the Father to be released from its traversal. Two things above all repel him. The first is “the terror which isolates”, the agony of aloneness “(a-demonein [Mark 14.33], anguish in separation from the ‘people’)”. His own people will reject him, handing him over to the Gentiles who will crucify him. That universal rejection is anticipated with particular poignancy in the sleep of the three disciples. Jesus had looked for their prayerful companionship, at a short distance – a stone’s throw – from his own place of “solitary struggle in prayer”. Their “incapacity” and failure earns from Jesus “a disappointment-filled reproach”.

More terrible even than the prospect of absolute isolation, and the second thing from which Jesus shrinks back, is the more particular significance of the cup he asks the Father to take away from him. The cup of suffering, it is the “chalice … of eschatological wrath”. His consenting to drink the cup – to go forth from the garden to the cross – will mark the “entry of the sin of the world into the personal existence, body and soul, of the representative Substitute and Mediator”. He will make his own the world’s No to God, experiencing “the inner perversion” of a humanity that refuses to

462 Mysterium 52.

463 Mysterium 101, 71-2.

464 Mysterium 101; “ … union in prayer … with this distinction, that Jesus prays in the peirasmos, whereas the disciples pray to be preserved from it” (ibid., 100).

465 Mysterium 100-1. “The dialectic of an absent presence of the Church at the side of the suffering Head is irresoluble. The ‘ought’ (heard by the Church’s parenesis an [sic] issuing from the mouth of Jesus) stands in contradiction to the impotence disclosed for judgment in the Passion” (ibid., 101).

466 Mysterium, 101, cf., 123.

467 Mysterium 101.
serve God, deliberately appropriating within himself “that darkness of alienation from God” that is humanity’s lot. Identifying himself with the world in its disobedience he will “divert onto himself all the anger of God at the world’s faithlessness”. This “immeasurably expands the hiatus” between his life before Gethsemane and “the hour”: hitherto he has manifest both the love and the anger of God; now he must become the object of God’s wrath.

He does this in obedience to the Father. He keeps faith with the Father precisely by keeping faith – refusing not to keep faith – with his unfaithful people. Accordingly he is caught in the midst of a dual and contradictory solidarity. At once solidary with the offended God and his offending people, it cannot be his will to come to the Father bearing within him the No of rebel humanity. His will is only to do, to affirm, the Father’s will. In the garden and all the way to the tomb the resolution of the equation, the compatibility of his double solidarity, is beyond him, so complete is his representative identification with the world’s No. The irresoluble contradiction casts him to the ground in a bloody sweat, wringing from him the anguished cry, Abba,

468 *Credo* 52.

469 *TD* 4, 334-5.

470 *TD* 4, 343, cf., 345; *TL* 2, 319.

471 *TD* 4, 343.

472 *TD* 4, 348; *Mysterium* 137-8.

473 “… the rationale of the fundamental anxiety involved is, above all, ‘shame’ or ‘infamy’ … *apodokimasthénai*: ‘to be declared useless’ (Mark 8.31, etc.)” (*Mysterium* 106).

474 *TD* 4, 336, 349. “His vision is darkened and his fear gains the upper hand (because he is loading upon himself the blindness and horror of sin) …” (*TD* 2, 297).
Father, take this cup from me. In anticipation he tastes the wine of “the graceless No of divine grace to [a sinful world’s] resistance [to God]” and shrinks back at its awful bitterness.475

Nonetheless, plea gives place to consent: not my will but your will be done. “This ‘not ... but’ is the entire remaining relationship with God, and on the cross it will, finally, be experienced only as the Father’s abandonment”.476 Between the plea and the ‘not ... but’ no light has been shed. He has not resolved the conundrum. Balthasar is insistent here, against every attempt to sidestep or surpass (“render ... innocuous”) the scandal of the cross and Jesus’ inexplicable assent to it. “Every ... schematism dissolves”, even that of the Old Testament “suffering righteous man”.477 Jesus’ Yes to the Father’s will “is content and form, excluding every other perspective”.478 That is because his ‘not ... but’ and the correspondingly unsurpassable scandal of the cross entail the contradictory juxtaposition of the groundlessness of the world’s No and the groundlessness of God’s Yes.479 It runs right through him, “not [as] one truth but [as] two, which remain standing side by side”.480

475 TD 4, 349.

476 Mysterium 72.

477 Mysterium 106; “... all broadly based, that is, universally applicable, categories fall away” (Mysterium 105-6).

478 Mysterium 105.

479 TD 4, 343.

480 TL 2, 325. "If we realize the ground-lessness of man’s free No in the face of the purely gracious (and hence ground-less) Yes of God’s love, it is clear that the expiation, the expurgation of this ground-less sin must involve a transfiguration through suffering that is surpassingly ‘ground-less’ [etwa Überg-Grundloses] in a way we cannot imagine" (TD 4, 338). "There is no balancing or cancelling-out, no 'squaring' of light and darkness; there can be no weighing-up of the ‘for nothing’ of sin's hatred and the ‘for nothing’ of the grace that gives and forgives" (TD 4, 349).
Consenting to the Father’s will, he consents to suffer in himself at once “the infinite suffering” that is the “effect of sin on God” and the “equally infinite suffering that, having been ‘made sin’ (2 Cor 5.21) on account of his unity with all sinners who offend God’s love, he causes in God”.\textsuperscript{481} Again, Jesus’ ‘not ... but’ is his absolute obedience to the Father “\textit{above and beyond} what he is able to achieve”.\textsuperscript{482} It cannot be his will (\textit{not my will}) because he cannot see, from below, that his being made sin and the cause of offence to God’s love is itself the love of God and fulfillment of his gracious will.\textsuperscript{483} Created human freedom is redeemed only on the other side of the exhaustion of its capacities, in those around Jesus but also in himself.\textsuperscript{484}

Does Jesus’ ‘not ... but’ exhibit then an ultimate dis-integration of the unity of his divine and human agency, his deity overruling and standing in for his bankrupt and rebellious humanity? Balthasar answers with a qualified Yes. It is only because he is the Son of God incarnate that Jesus is able to remain faithful to the Father even as the grace and love and promise of the Father are increasingly and finally totally eclipsed behind the Father’s final rejection of the “God-hostile flesh” that Jesus has made his own.\textsuperscript{485}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{481} \textit{TL} 2, 325.
\item \textsuperscript{482} \textit{TD} 3, 170, italics added. No longer in possession of his mission he is possessed by it “at a level where human power no longer avails” (\textit{TD} 3, 226).
\item \textsuperscript{483} “In the Passion, the Father’s loving countenance can disappear behind the hard facts of what must be” (\textit{TD} 3, 188).
\item \textsuperscript{484} “All he can do, in the trembling weakness of mortal fear, is to pray for it to pass him by and then ... to affirm it as his Father’s will, not his own” (\textit{TD} 4, 335; cf., \textit{TL} 2, 326).
\item \textsuperscript{485} \textit{TL} 2, 326. “Christ must be God if he is so to place himself at the disposal of the event of love which flows from the Father and would reconcile the world with itself that in him the entire darkness of all that is counter to God can be judged and overcome” (\textit{Mysterium} 112, cf., 52).
\end{itemize}
And yet, Balthasar’s Yes is qualified – essentially – by the resurrection. The sovereign freedom of the risen Jesus is “the revelation of that hidden freedom that is expressed in his total obedience to the Father”.\(^{486}\) That hidden freedom of total obedience is not the overruling of his rebellious human will by his deity. Rather, it is “a freedom that is not only divine but human”.\(^{487}\) The not my will is not a denial of his humanity by his deity but a divine-human self-abandonment and self-committal to the Father, an act of the indivisible God-man, the Word become flesh.\(^{488}\) He no more takes leave of his humanity and its proper agency in consenting to the Father’s will, than he does of his deity and divine agency in pleading for withdrawal of the cup. Even as his vision is obscured by the fearful prospect of coming before the Father laden with the world’s disobedience as his own, “for him, the realm of the Father’s freedom remains wide open. Beyond his entreaty [take this cup] lies the certainty that the Father’s will must be fulfilled”.\(^{489}\) The how is beyond him. But his faith sustains him in the course of his obedience, his suffering indeed teaching him obedience.\(^{490}\)

The hypostatic union of divine and human agency in Jesus Christ, above all in Gethsemane, is mysterious to be sure, a hidden freedom, in viatorum hidden and

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\(^{486}\) *TD* 4, 364. It was “Maximus’ discovery ... that we cannot read the agony in the Garden as if Jesus’ human will had first balked at the imminent Passion and had then been overpowered and brought back into line by the divine will, but that, on the contrary, it was none other than this human will that had to give its free consent to the Father’s plan. Only thus is Chalcedon brought to its logical conclusion; only thus does the man Jesus really cooperate in effecting the redemption of man in his Passion. Maximus thus supersedes in advance all Christologies that would speak of Jesus as the ‘empty’ vessel of the divine will – or, at least, gives them their correct interpretation as describing an active operation of the man Jesus that remains so even in his kenosis” (*TL* 2, 69-70).

\(^{487}\) *TD* 4, 364.

\(^{488}\) *TL* 2, 246-7, 354 n. 152; *TD* 3, 163; *TD* 4, 364.

\(^{489}\) *TD* 2, 297.

\(^{490}\) *Mysterium* 105, citing Heb 5.7ff.
mysterious even to Jesus.\textsuperscript{491} Manifest at the resurrection, it remains mysterious – describable and to that extent explicable only on its own unique terms: “... a logic whose content is the uniqueness and personality of the eternal Logos become man, a logic created by him and identical with him”.\textsuperscript{492}

\textsuperscript{491} Credo 52.

\textsuperscript{492} Mysterium 54; “… intraworldy contradiction is overcome by the trinitarian logic ...” (TL 2, 355).
Correspondence

The double agency of Christ according to Karl Barth

I shall begin my treatment of Barth as I did Meyendorff and Balthasar, with discrete analyses of the deity and humanity of Christ. For the sake of my thesis this works. However, it is only relatively satisfactory for getting at Barth’s understanding of the divine and human agency of Jesus Christ. Barth’s developed christology is contrapuntal. Several motifs are played together and must be heard together: specifically, the two natures of Christ, but equally if not more importantly the two status, the \textit{status exaltationis} and \textit{status humiliationis}. The first two sections of what follows are therefore at best introductory, taking note of those places where Barth focuses his attention on one and then the other of the natures (his preferred term is essence) in relative isolation. The third section, on the kenosis of Christ will endeavour to reflect the contrapuntal fullness of Barth’s christology with reference specifically to Christ’s double agency.

The Deity of Christ

The deed of God, whether in election, creation, revelation, reconciliation, or redemption, is God’s deed, caused solely by his intention and disposition, and not by ours. It is his free act, in which he is faithful to himself. In his deed, in faithfulness to
himself, he shows himself to be, in himself and originally, with and for humanity. His
deed is never at one or more removes from himself. In his deed from its origin in
eternity to its eternal fulfillment, and all along the way, he himself is present.493

This is especially the case where we might have expected it to be otherwise, in
reconciliation. There, God’s deed entails his becoming human. Surely the human must
contribute something, however modest, circumscribed, towards the accomplishment of
reconciliation. Barth is emphatic. Even here, it is altogether and solely God’s work.494
By his own will, owing nothing to himself, the world, or any human creature, he
maintains and effects the glory of his free grace and mercy.495 The atonement is God’s
triump in the face of humanity’s hostility that contains not the least trace of mutuality
or cooperation or even the latent capacity for such.496

The deed of God has a personal name, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God in action
and “the telos of all the acts of God”, God’s first and eternal Word, and therefore elector
and elect, creator and creature, revealer and revealed, reconciler and reconciled.497 He
is God with us as “an act of God, or rather the being of God in Jesus Christ’s life and

493 Karl Barth, God in Action, trans. by E. G. Homrighausen and Karl J. Ernst (Manhasset: Round Table
Press, 1963), 4-8, 11-19; Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol. 4, The Doctrine of Reconciliation, Pt. 1, ed.
(hereafter cited as, CD 4/1).

494 CD 4/1, 31, 73, 74, 159.

495 CD 4/1, 80, 81, 83.

496 “It does not depend at all on what man had or has or will have to contribute from below” (4/1, 83, cf.,
82; also, 207, where the Virgin Birth is identified as a sign of this unilaterally triumphant and gracious
activity of God).

497 CD 4/1, 7-8, cf., 5, 16, 18, 50-1, 170; also, God in Action, 13-15, 16. Barth attributes redemption to the
Holy Spirit.
action”. More specifically, none other than God himself is the acting subject of the incarnation, though He is that, not as the Father or the Spirit, but as the Son – albeit always as the Son of the Father in the Spirit.

The will of God is one. So that the decision to be God with and for the world may not be pushed back mythologically into a coming to agreement of the different subjects and wills of the eternal Father and the eternal Son. From eternity, “the one ‘personality’ of God, the one active and speaking divine Ego”, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, decreed as the one God to be Emmanuel, taking into unity with himself the human creature so that the eternal Son is “no longer just the eternal Logos, but as such ... the very God and very man He will become in time”.

In time then, Jesus Christ is the eternal Son who is from God and who is God, who therefore does the will of God as his own will and his own will as the will of God. He is nothing less than God himself in his sovereign freedom, incarnating and enacting

498 CD 4/1, 18; cf., “God Himself lives and acts and speaks and suffers and triumphs ... as this one man” (ibid., 35-6); “in Him ... we have to do wholly with God ... in all the divine freedom of his love” (ibid., 126); also, ibid., 5; also, Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol. 4, The Doctrine of Reconciliation, Pt. 2, ed. G. W. Bromiley & T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), 115-16 (hereafter cited as, CD 4/2).

499 CD 4/1, 128-9.

500 CD 4/1, 205.

501 CD 4/1, 66. Jüngel interprets this as follows: “God, by His eternal election of the temporal being of Jesus of Nazareth, has created space within himself for another being, alien to himself. ... Here, in this space ... the essence of humanity finds God before it finds itself” (Eberhard Jüngel, Karl Barth, a Theological Legacy, trans. Garrett E. Paul [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986], 130). In this connection see Barth’s rejection of the logos asarkos (CD 4/1, 52-3).

502 “Jesus Christ reveals to us our election as an election which is made by Him, by His will which is also the will of God. He tells us that He Himself is the One who elects us” (Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol. 2, The Doctrine of God, Pt. 2, ed. G. W. Bromiley & T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley et al. [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957], 115 [hereafter cited as, CD 2/2]).
the eternal decree of the triune God.\textsuperscript{503} Indeed, we must grant priority, not to the divine decree as an eternal abstraction, as the will of God forever fixed and static, but to its historical enactment in which Jesus Christ reveals himself to be, from all eternity, its subject and object – the electing God and elect humanity.\textsuperscript{504} Which means that everything else without exception derives its significance from Jesus and his history.\textsuperscript{505}

We have seen Barth’s insistence on the unilateral character of God’s will and activity in the atonement. This applies specifically and provocatively to what might have been supposed to be a peculiarly human attribute and activity, the obedience of Jesus Christ. The New Testament does not ascribe this to his human nature as such, but to his deity.\textsuperscript{506} The Son of God is \textit{vere deus} precisely in his willing obedience of the Father. In Jesus Christ, “the true God ... is obedient”.\textsuperscript{507} And he is that, even unto death. As the incarnate existence of the Son of God is, in its beginning and in its continuing, a divine act, so it is at its ending. The passion and cross of Christ are a sovereign and divine action, the willingly obedient action of God, the Son of God.\textsuperscript{508} In Jesus Christ, God assumes complete responsibility for the being, activity, and destiny of the human creature, making his own affair the reconstitution and renewal of the

\textsuperscript{503} \textit{CD} 4/1, 71-2, 126, 128-9. Cf., “… in the eternal background of history, in the beginning with God, the only decree which was passed, the only Word which was spoken and which prevails, was the decision which was executed by Him [Jesus Christ]” (\textit{CD} 2/2, 115).

\textsuperscript{504} The human history of Jesus is “the content of the eternal decree and will of God” \textit{CD} 4/1, 35; cf., 2/2, 115-17; also, 4/2, 107.

\textsuperscript{505} \textit{CD} 4/1, 16, 18, 50.

\textsuperscript{506} \textit{CD} 4/1, 164.

\textsuperscript{507} \textit{CD} 4/1, 164, cf., 159; 4/2, 3.

\textsuperscript{508} \textit{CD} 4/1, 235, 254, 255. I shall return to this in more detail under “the Kenosis of the Son”.
covenant from both his and our sides, “committing and compromising himself” for the salvation of his irresponsible covenant partner.509

The Humanity of Christ

Jesus, the Son of God incarnate, is vere homo, human like us.510 The full, authentic, and individual humanity of this man, Jesus of Nazareth, is indubitable.511 He lived under the same conditions as we do, as “an individual soul of an individual body, knowing and willing and feeling as a man, active and passive in the time allotted, responsible to God, and tied to His fellows”.512 Above all, he enacted his human identity as God’s human covenant partner. As God goes forth in the historical Jesus Christ, so also does man come in.513 Freely, willingly, alive in his own act, Jesus responded to the free and liberating grace of God not merely as an object of the event of atonement but as an active human subject.514

509 CD 4/2, 87, cf., 4; also, 4/1, 158.

510 CD 4/1, 13, 126, 135.

511 “[God] does give himself up ... to ... becoming one of these men” (CD 4/1, 130). “[I]n Jesus Christ we have to do with a true man. The reconciliation of the world with God takes place in the person of a man” (ibid.). (Cf., ibid., 13, 126, 160; 4/2, 42, 349).

512 CD 4/2, 91; cf., “… [as a] historical ... creaturely ... individually distinct soul and body ... in a fixed time ... in the same orientation to God and man” (ibid., 25, cf., 73).

513 CD 4/2, 21.

514 CD 4/1, 5, 7, 20; 4/2, 6, 8, 19.
The deed of reconciliation was not an arbitrary act of divine and omnipotent grace that rendered the human creature a mere spectator devoid of all responsibility.\textsuperscript{515} On the contrary, specifically human freedom, activity, and responsibility, far from being extinguished, were established originally and savingly in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate and as such the God who gives salvation, is equally the human creature to whom it is given, and more, who is humanly willing for (“who allows”) it to be given to him.\textsuperscript{516} In his life-act the covenant broken by Israel and all of humanity is willingly maintained by him as God’s faithful human covenant partner.\textsuperscript{517}

We shall have more to say about the atonement as exchange, and more particularly Jesus’ making his own the situation into which humanity has fallen. For the present, it is sufficient to take account of the other side of the exchange wherein Jesus grants to us his status as God’s faithful covenant partner. The critical point here is that this side of the exchange is as much about Jesus as is the other. Not only does he take to himself our sinful and judged status; but, in himself, “in the event of His, the Gospel history”, he enacts our trusting obedience, fulfilling all righteousness.\textsuperscript{518}

Jesus is “the righteous man”.\textsuperscript{519} As the Son of God fulfilling the saving purpose and action of God, he lives and acts as “the one man obedient to God”.\textsuperscript{520} As such, he is

\textsuperscript{515} CD 4/1, 12, 14. Barth notes especially in 2\textsuperscript{nd} Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel the unmistakable emphasis on “the active cooperation of Yahweh’s human covenant partner” in opposition to “too much ... one-sided arrangement and miraculous operation of Yahweh” (ibid., 29, see whole section, 28-34). That Barth is cautious in his use of “cooperation”, preferring “response” and “correspondence”, to describe faithful human activity, is something I will return to below; but see ibid., 113.

\textsuperscript{516} CD 4/1, 19, cf., 14-15, 18, 113.

\textsuperscript{517} CD 4/2, 167; cf., “In [Jesus Christ] man keeps and maintains the same faithfulness to God that God had never ceased to maintain and keep to him” (4/1, 89). Also, “The Lord of the covenant willed to be also its human partner and the keeper of the covenant on this side too” (4/2, 43).

\textsuperscript{518} CD 4/1, 230, cf., 76, 89-90; 4/2, 43.

\textsuperscript{519} CD 4/1, 257.
true to human nature as God made it. For God appointed humanity in its own decisions spontaneously to follow and correspond to his decisions. The obedience of the human creature is its freedom.\textsuperscript{521} But humanity forfeited its freedom by its disobedience, its betrayal not only of its Creator but also of its own nature as God’s creature.\textsuperscript{522} That disobedience and unrighteousness is removed by “the existence of the one obedient and therefore free man”, Jesus of Nazareth.\textsuperscript{523} In his passion, but also in his existence up to the passion, Jesus does his “human work”.\textsuperscript{524} Step by step, and moment by moment, he refuses the way of impenitence, self-justification, and disobedience, and decides for the cause of God, willing what he wills, doing what he does, all the way to the cross.\textsuperscript{525}

Obedience is at once the freedom from which humanity has fallen and the freedom to which the covenant partner of God is called. By his human work of rendering that obedience, and precisely in that way, Jesus “found [God’s] good pleasure” as his faithful covenant partner, and restored humanity to “the place from which they had fallen ... the place which belongs to the creature in relation to God”.\textsuperscript{526}

\textsuperscript{520} CD 4/1, 257.

\textsuperscript{521} CD 4/1, 257; 4/2, 4.

\textsuperscript{522} CD 4/1, 257.

\textsuperscript{523} CD 4/1, 258.

\textsuperscript{524} CD 4/1, 257.

\textsuperscript{525} CD 4/1, 118, 258-9.

\textsuperscript{526} CD 4/1, 94, 259.
In the concrete life-act of the man, Jesus, “the divine promise of the future of the being of man is not only revealed but is actual, an event, ... not only noetically but ontically ... identical with Him”.\(^{527}\)

The Kenosis of the Son\(^{528}\)

The problem of my thesis in relation to Barth is evident in light of this juxtaposition of Christ’s deity and humanity. The event of atonement, the reconciliation of the world, in Jesus Christ’s life, death, and resurrection is, on the one hand, an act of divine majesty – “miraculously, one-sidedly, and self-gloriously” the act of God which is not even “partly conditioned by an act of man”.\(^{529}\) The meaning, basis, and power of the life-act of Jesus Christ are constituted solely by God’s activity as, at once, its ratio essendi and ratio cognoscendi.\(^{530}\)

On the other hand, in line especially with the witness of the great prophets of Israel, there must be an unmistakable emphasis laid upon the active cooperation and complementary faithfulness of God’s human covenant partner.\(^{531}\) The human creature

\(^{527}\) CD 4/1, 117.

\(^{528}\) This heading serves the symmetry of my paper. It is somewhat misleading with respect to Barth’s Church Dogmatics, in which “kenosis” plays a relatively minor part. An unwieldy title such as “The Humiliation of the Son of God and the Exaltation of the Son of Man” or more briefly “The Free Obedience of the Son” would more accurately reflect the substance of what follows. I have kept the heading because the material under examination may be read as offering an account of the Son’s kenosis set free from the haunting specter of nineteenth century kenotic theories and more closely reflective of the biblical witness.

\(^{529}\) CD 4/2, 52, 46, cf., 45; 4/1, 68.

\(^{530}\) CD 4/2, 37.

\(^{531}\) CD 4/1, 29, 33.
is not merely the object or passive spectator of the “too much one-sided and miraculous operation” of the grace of God, but an active human subject, the individual and spontaneously responsive man, Jesus of Nazareth.532

How can the event that is Jesus Christ be one-sidedly and comprehensively God’s will and deed, and at the same time include the willingly cooperative activity of the human creature as covenant partner? In Barth’s own words, how can it be “wholly and utterly a movement from above to below, of God to man” and “wholly and utterly a movement from below to above, the movement of ... man to God”?533

In very brief, Barth’s answer is that it is precisely in and by the deed of God, God the Son of God become flesh in Jesus Christ, that the human creature is set free to be the faithful covenant partner of God. In becoming man, this particular man Jesus, the Son of God neither eclipsed nor overwhelmed but originally and savingly established our humanity.534 So, “the movement from below to above which takes place originally in this man does not compete with the movement of God from above to below. It takes place because and as the latter takes place”.535

That brief answer calls for more expansive exposition. Barth’s radical insistence on the one-sidedness of God’s activity in Jesus Christ stands over against every suggestion that the human freedom and activity of Jesus derives (even only in the smallest part) from humanity, human nature, as such. The human existence of Jesus is

532 CD 4/1, 29, cf., 12.

533 CD 4/2, 6, cf., 19.

534 CD 4/1, 14-15, 18-19, 131-2, 134.

535 CD 4/2, 47.
not the realization of one of the possibilities latent in the being and/or history of the human race.\textsuperscript{536} Even as assumed by the Son of God, human nature possessed of itself neither the capacity nor the willingness to respond faithfully to the grace of God.\textsuperscript{537}

Instead, “the actuality of this man ... is an absolutely new event ... the work of a new act of God”.\textsuperscript{538} At the sole initiative of God, the Son of God took human nature to himself and “clothed it with actuality by making Himself its actuality”.\textsuperscript{539} Human nature was “there already” when he became man, in Israel and in Mary, not as an

\textsuperscript{536} CD 4/2, 31, 45, 179-80; cf., 4/1, 256.

\textsuperscript{537} CD 4/1, 82, 198.

I have referred already to the “unmistakable emphasis” on “the active cooperation” (in Second Isaiah) and the “complementary faithfulness” (in Jeremiah and Ezekiel) of Yahweh’s human covenant partner (ibid., 29, 33). I did not include mention of what receives equally unmistakable emphasis, namely, that this active cooperation and complementary faithfulness is achieved by God through the forgiveness of sins, whereby God “in a sense compulsorily places in [us] the freedom of obedience which we owe him as covenant partners” (ibid., 33).

In this connection, Barth explicitly opposes himself to Schleiermacher (ibid., 49-51). He rejects his conception of Jesus as the fulfilment (“highest evolutionary continuation”) of “the immanent telos” of the world and of humanity, albeit a fulfilment which “God has willed and accomplished”. The covenant fellowship to which God has elected humanity in Jesus Christ “is not given in and with the nature of the creature. It is not the product or goal of that nature, although that nature itself is from God”. Jesus Christ is not the continuation of the first Adam but, in sharpest antithesis, he is the Last Adam.

We may compare with this, Barth’s rejection of the Roman Catholic two-fold understanding of grace as uncreated (God’s grace) and created (which he describes as “our grace”, albeit “effected and empowered by” uncreated grace). Taking note of the corresponding pairs of gratia praeveniens/gratia concomitans, gratia operans/gratia cooperans, and gratia sufficiens/gratia efficax; he connects all of them to an account of the relation of divine and human activity. The free and cooperative activity of the human creature completes (subjectively and effectively) the preparatory and preconditioning grace of God: human cooperation is impossible apart from the prior grace of God, but equally, preparatory divine grace is incomplete (only objectively but not subjectively effective) apart from the free and cooperative activity of the human creature. Barth rejects this account in favour of the evangelical unity of grace and that “simplicity of heart which lets the grace of God be exclusively His grace”. God’s grace is not merely a, or even the, condizione sine qua non, the opening up and offering of a possibility that awaits and depends upon our actualising it, but is altogether actual in Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of the sovereign purpose and act of God’s grace. In Jesus Christ, “the genuinely subjective is already included in the true objective” (ibid., 84-8). He is not a means to something else, but is, in his history, atonement – its “beginning ... middle ... and end” (ibid., 125, cf., 126-7); “He is himself this actuality” (ibid., 137).

\textsuperscript{538} CD 4/2, 37; “… an event which is sui generis and distinct from all others” (ibid.).

\textsuperscript{539} CD 4/2, 50; cf., “… caused by [God’s] intention and disposition and not by man’s” (God in Action, 4).
individual, but neither as merely generic or abstract humanity.540 In Israel and in Mary, and therefore in humanity as defined by God’s concrete election and call, in humanity as prepared by God for the incarnation and atonement, human nature was there as “the concrete possibility of the existence of one man in a specific form”.541 But, again, it was the Son of God who, by a sovereign act of grace exclusively his own,542 actualised that concrete possibility.543 If the possibility was “already there”, it was “only there”; of itself it was “useless” and entirely without honour.544

The actuality of this absolutely new man, far from compromising the natures either of God or of the human, fulfills and establishes them. The kenotic condescension of the Son of God marks no diminution in God but is that action in which God is most essentially God.545 Equally, that same condescension delivers humanity from its onward rush towards death and exalts it to the sanctified liberty that is the goal for which it was originally created and the promise given to Israel on its behalf.546 The

540 CD 4/2, 45, cf., 48.

541 CD 4/2, 48, cf., 37, 45.

542 CD 4/2, 101-2; cf., “The grace of God triumphs ... miraculously, unilaterally, and autocratically – to its own self-glory” (4/1, 68).

543 “[T]he direct unity of existence of the Son of God with the man Jesus of Nazareth ... is produced by the fact that in Himself this One raises up to actuality, and maintains in actuality, the possibility of a form of human being and existence present in the existence of the one elect Israel and the one elect Mary” (CD 4/2, 51).

544 CD 4/2, 45. In this connection, Barth applies and expounds the traditional doctrine of the anhypostasis, the impersonalitas, of Christ’s human nature, and the corresponding enhypostasis and unio hypostasis, in order to ascribe the concrete actuality of the man Jesus solely and exclusively to the being and action of the Son of God (ibid., 49-53).


546 CD 4/2, 37.
exinanitio of God in Jesus Christ thus reveals and confirms the integrity and the unity of his deity and humanity. It is not the *vere deus* and *vere homo* that define Jesus Christ, as if their content were given apart from him. Rather, from beginning to end, he, in his temporal history from Bethlehem to Golgotha, “defines those concepts”.

It remains to fill out this last paragraph in which the two pairs of themes that constitute the contrapuntal character of Barth’s christology have finally been brought together. Jesus Christ is at once God in the act of his humiliation and human in the event of his exaltation. To Barth’s extensive development of that counterpoint I shall now turn, with particular reference to Christ’s divine and human freedom of agency and activity.

The problem of the double agency of Christ manifests itself in the form of what Barth calls a severe antithesis or riddle. Surprisingly perhaps, it is not the juxtaposition of divine and human agencies as such. Though, that potentially problematic relation is accounted for in Barth’s treatment of this more serious riddle. I have said that Barth insists upon the radical coincidence of the natures, but more provocatively of the *status*, of Christ. Christ’s exaltation neither precedes nor succeeds his humiliation. Furthermore, both *status* apply to each nature, coincidentally. In Jesus Christ, the glorious God is the humiliated man, and the humiliated God is the royal man.

It is this double simultaneity of exaltation and humiliation that constitutes the severe riddle at the heart of the enacted identity, the double agency, of Jesus. I say ‘double’ simultaneity because the riddle must be faced “from two different standpoints – from that of the humiliation of the Exalted, the Son of God, and from that of the

547 *CD* 4/1, 129, cf., 136.

548 *CD* 4/2, 348.
exaltation of the Humiliated, the Son of Man”, and from both as they have taken place simultaneously in the one Jesus Christ.549

This twofold antithesis must not be dissolved, or disguised, or softened. “Its severity is that of the New Testament witness to Christ”.550 Equally, its apparently paradoxical character “cannot be our final word in relation to Jesus Christ”.551 Without removing the antithesis, it must be shown that the history of Jesus Christ is not reflective of an essential conflict either in the very being of God, or in human being, or in the relation between God and humanity.552 How then does Barth face up to the severity of the riddle without its contradicting, but rather proving necessary to,553 the revelation and demonstration of the glory of the triune God in His reconciling of the world to himself in Jesus Christ?

We shall answer the question first from the standpoint of the humiliation of the Exalted. Here the antithesis is in the humiliation and abasement of the glorious Son of God.554 How is it that these are not mutually exclusive? We would be unfaithful to Barth if we were to rush into his answer without permitting ourselves to appreciate the

549 CD 4/2, 348.

550 CD 4/2, 348.

551 CD 4/2, 348.

552 The demonstration of its not being essentially paradoxical is what Barth intends by “overcoming” the antithesis (CD 4/2, 348). Though its overcoming is not its dissolution “... even subsequently” (ibid, 348). As it is overcome, it remains a necessary antithesis.

553 It is a “necessary antithesis”; the Holy Spirit “discloses the antithesis which dominates this life in its necessity ...” (CD 4/2, 348, 352).

554 E.g., “The eternal Son of God ... became lowly and mean and despicable” (CD 4/2, 349).
severity of the antithesis itself. That will require our close study of the contours and depths of the Son’s kenosis.

He became *vere homo*, and that not in its unlost goodness but in its self-contradiction as perverted and lost, in all its mortal and moral frailty. All the limitations of fallen humanity were his.\textsuperscript{555} That still leaves the “one thing” apart from which everything else lacks its proper “contour and colour, definiteness and necessity”.\textsuperscript{556} The Word became a Jew, this particular Jew, this son of Abraham, David and Mary.\textsuperscript{557} As such, he is neither a neutral nor an idealised human being, but the one in whom Yahweh brings to fulfillment his covenant with his elect people.\textsuperscript{558} The obedience that characterises Christ’s whole existence is most essentially defined by his being the object of the electing will and covenant mercy and faithfulness of the God of Israel, “bound by the same obedience and service of God” as Israel is.\textsuperscript{559} But, if he is the fulfillment of that covenant, he is so in the most complete solidarity with Israel as God’s unfaithful and rebellious covenant partner.\textsuperscript{560} In becoming flesh, the Son and

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\textsuperscript{555} “[A]ll the limitations of man are God’s limitations, all his weaknesses, and more, all his perversities are His” (*CD* 4/1, 158, cf., 130f). “The Word became ... the bearer of our human essence, which is marked ... (in self-contradiction) by sin, so that it is a perverted essence and lost as such” (4/2, 92, cf., 95).

For a critique of the attribution of fallenness to Christ’s humanity in its Western, and in particular though not exclusively, its Reformed guise (including Barth), see Oliver Crisp, “Did Christ have a *fallen* human nature?”, in *Divinity and Humanity: the Incarnation Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 90-117. His criticism is essentially that “fallenness requires original sin” (117), so that the sinlessness of Christ can no longer be maintained.

\textsuperscript{556} *CD* 4/1, 166.

\textsuperscript{557} *CD* 4/1, 166-7, 170; 4/2, 6.

\textsuperscript{558} It is specifically the Old Testament that ensures that “the simple truth that Jesus Christ was a born Jew, is never lost sight of, but constantly survives the irruption of all too generalised views of the man Jesus” (*CD* 4/1, 167).

\textsuperscript{559} *CD* 4/1, 170. “He is subject to the particular Law which governs the life of Israel” (4/2, 74).

\textsuperscript{560} *CD* 4/1, 171f.
Word of God made the status and the situation of Israel “his own”, existing “with and as man in this [Israel’s] fallen and perishing state”, hurrying downward into the abyss and crying with Israel in his need.\textsuperscript{561}

Humanity’s fallenness, human disobedience and sin, are only really known in light of God’s election of Israel.\textsuperscript{562} There, sin is revealed within the context of the covenant as rebellion against the covenant. But that revelation is not Israel’s own work. It is Jesus alone who reveals the true state of affairs between God and humanity. Because, in continuity with his merciful intercession for Israel, his grace shown to his enemies, which is nothing other than the very being and activity of God in his condescension to Abraham and his seed, there is manifest “the radical and fundamental admission” of Israel’s, and therefore of humanity’s, “incapacity, unwillingness, and unworthiness” before God.\textsuperscript{563}

That is evident in Israel’s rejection of their Messiah. But, more profoundly and more mysteriously, it is revealed in that same Messiah’s willingness to “confess Himself a sinner, and to be regarded and dealt with as such”.\textsuperscript{564} Jesus takes the place of Israel as God’s disobedient son.\textsuperscript{565} He affirms the justice of God’s judgment against, and

\textsuperscript{561} CD 4/1, 215; he became “… an individual man of this people [Israel] and as such a man amongst all men” (ibid.).

\textsuperscript{562} 4/1, 171.

\textsuperscript{563} CD 4/1, 172-3.

\textsuperscript{564} CD 4/1, 172. “The Son of God in His unity with the Israelite Jesus exists in direct and unlimited solidarity with the representatively and manifestly sinful humanity of Israel” (ibid.).

\textsuperscript{565} “He does not suffer any suffering, but their [‘these Old Testament men’(s)’] suffering; the suffering of children chastised by their Father. He does not suffer any death, but the death to which the history of Israel moves relentlessly forward” (CD 4/1, 175).
negation of, Israel; but more, he wills himself to be the object of that judgment, “allowing it to be fulfilled on Himself ... will[ing,] Himself[,] to be rejected and therefore perishing man”.566 One with Israel, one with sinful Israel, the incarnate Son of God, Jesus the Jew, is willingly one with Israel under the judgment of Israel’s God.567

One with sinful Israel under judgment, Jesus was yet without sin. Because his kenotic humiliation included his having taken to himself fallen human nature, he, the incarnate Word, willingly exposed himself to all the temptation to which humanity is subject. So completely did he make our situation his own that he “faced the dreadful possibility of ingratitude, disobedience, unfaithfulness, pride, cowardice and deceit, ... he knew it ... and came to closer grips with it than any other man”.568 His sinlessness is not a static condition. Rather is it his step-by-step willingness actively to refuse to yield to temptation all the way to his death on the cross.569

This all too brief explication of the contours of the Son of God’s humiliation, especially in his absolute identification with the alien life of sinful Israel under the wrath and judgment of Israel’s God, suggests that God’s work of reconciliation entailed his setting himself against himself in self-contradiction, not merely giving himself to and for the world, but giving himself away, “giv[ing] up being God ... in his

566 CD 4/1, 175, cf., 241-2.

567 For the Son of God “to be flesh means to exist with the ‘children’ of Israel under the wrath and judgment of the electing and loving God ... in a state of perishing .... He is broken and destroyed on God .... For God is in the right against man” (CD 4/1, 174-5).

568 CD 4/1, 216.

569 CD 4/1, 258-9.
incarnation”.\textsuperscript{570} As compelling as this sounds, especially when it is presented under the guise of “supreme praise of God”, it must be recognised for what it is, namely, a sharp temptation to be caught up in “supreme blasphemy”.\textsuperscript{571} That God is not in conflict with himself and does not cease to be God even upon Golgotha is explicable only when we discern the ultimate grounding of the humiliation of the Exalted in “the will of the Father and the Son”.\textsuperscript{572}

God’s will encounters but does not contradict itself in the incarnation. It is a single will possessed of a common purpose and goal, the love in which God “really turned” and gave himself for the world in face of, and in answer to, humanity’s sin and perdition.\textsuperscript{573} On its own, this definition of the single will of God in terms of its purpose and goal is insufficient, and must be redescribed in terms of the Father and Son. The single divine will encompasses both the Father’s command of the Son, and the Son’s willing obedience of the Father. The Father sends the Son to accomplish “the decisive work of divine love”; the Son is willing to be sent to accomplish that work.\textsuperscript{574} This relation so characterised constitutes the highest and most perfect unity, the essential unity of God himself.\textsuperscript{575}

\textsuperscript{570} CD 4/1, 184.

\textsuperscript{571} CD 4/1, 185.

\textsuperscript{572} CD 4/2, 350.

\textsuperscript{573} CD 4/2, 351.

\textsuperscript{574} CD 4/2, 351.

\textsuperscript{575} “God’s divine unity consists in the fact that in Himself He is both One who is obeyed and Another who obeys” (CD 4/1, 201, cf., 202). Moreover, the same God who is God in these two modes of Being (the Father who commands and the Son who obeys) is God in a third mode of being (the Spirit) in virtue of which he is in the first and second modes of being “without division or contradiction, the whole God in each. But again in virtue of this third mode of being He is in neither for itself and apart from the other, but in each in its relationship to the other, and therefore ... in ... the history of these relationships ... [and] only in these relationships” (ibid., 203, cf., 205).
“In this obedience He [the Son] becomes man”\textsuperscript{576}. In this brief sentence the “necessity” of the severe antithesis that is the humiliation of the Exalted, and its “overcoming”, are comprehended. The necessity is grounded in the self-giving love of God, or more precisely in the Father’s sending of the Son and the Son’s willingness to be sent to intercede on behalf of, and in the place of, sinful humanity – to be the Judge judged in our place.\textsuperscript{577} Equally, its overcoming is achieved in the Son’s becoming flesh in order to intercede for us and in our place in willing obedience to the Father.

With respect then both to the necessity and to the overcoming of the riddle (in its first form, as the humiliation of the Exalted), it is the Son’s willing obedience to the Father’s command that is decisive. Because originally and finally the humiliation of the Exalted is the Exalted’s act of obedience, the Humiliated is as such, as the Son of God obedient unto death, the exalted Son of Man. The Son becomes human and enacts his human identity from beginning to end in uncompromising obedience to the Father. Therefore, even in the deepest and darkest humiliation of his passion, indeed most of all there, he is exalted and royal. None of this comes upon him accidentally, or by blind necessity, or in spite of himself. He willingly, obediently, freely takes it upon himself according to the will of the Father.\textsuperscript{578}

\textsuperscript{576} CD 4/2, 351.

\textsuperscript{577} Barth’s use of the term, ‘necessity’ (and its cognates), does not imply God’s being obligated to something outside of himself, or even to something internal to his being if that is some form of \textit{a priori}, logical necessity postulated of deity as such. Rather, its properly theological use is appropriate only as a predicate of God’s sovereign and triune freedom. So, for example, the incarnation is said to have been “necessary only by virtue of the will of God Himself”, so that it is also and equally “a free divine activity, a sovereign act of divine lordship” (CD 4/1, 179).

\textsuperscript{578} CD 4/1, 209; 4/2, 351.
Barth knows that his direct attribution of obedience to the Son of God is provocative. He also knows that it could be made less offensive by attributing it to the humanity assumed by the Son. But, according to the New Testament, human nature, even the Son’s, does not have this character. On the contrary, the New Testament explicitly describes the Son of God as “the servant, indeed as the suffering servant”. Therefore, the deity of Christ consists precisely of “that which apparently stands in the greatest possible contradiction to the being of God”, namely, that He “wills only to be obedient to the will of the Father”. His deity is precisely the obedience in which he humbled himself “in the omnipotence of His mercy”. The provocative equation must be allowed to stand: “the true God … is obedient”. To repeat, the humiliation, the human existence, of God the Son – in the flesh and therefore under God’s judgment and wrath – is no accident, nor is it a “foil” that merely

579 It seems to “compromise the unity and … equality of the divine being” (CD 4/1, 195); see the whole section (ibid., 195-200) for Barth’s examination of subordinationism and modalism as two opposite christological solutions that are really no solutions to this problem.

580 CD 4/1, 208.

581 CD 4/1, 164.

582 CD 4/1, 164. “[God] is not therefore exposed to the postulate that He can become and be this ['lowly and obedient'] only as a creature” (ibid., 199, cf., 204). “God is ... not only the One who commands, but the One who is called and pledged to obedience” (ibid., 170). “We recognized the true Godhead of Jesus Christ in the humility of the obedience in which He, the eternal Son of the Eternal Father, humbled Himself ...” (4/2, 3-4). “[T]he way of obedience ... is the first and inner moment of the mystery of the deity of Christ” (4/1, 192). “[W]e have ... in the existence of that man [Jesus] the action and presence which is supremely proper to God Himself” (ibid., 199). “[W]e cannot refuse to accept the humiliation and lowliness and supremely the obedience of Christ as the dominating moment in our conception of God ... [and] the key to the whole difficult and heavily freighted concept of the ‘divine nature’” (ibid., 199).

583 CD 4/2, 3-4.

584 CD 4/1, 164. “God Himself is ... able and free to render obedience” (ibid., 193). See the whole section, ibid., 188-94.
illuminates by contrast his glory, nor is it a means to an end.\textsuperscript{585} It is an act of “His own free and in that way genuinely obedient will”.\textsuperscript{586}

We saw earlier that the temporal history of the incarnate Son is grounded in the eternal decree of God, so that the content of that decree is nothing other than Jesus Christ in his history. Because God does not first elect humanity but himself to be humanity’s God by becoming human, he “elects and determines Himself for humiliation”.\textsuperscript{587} And we have seen that the same thing is said in terms of the command of God the Father and the obedience of God the Son. It follows then that the humiliation of the Exalted, far from violating the being of God, is the “supreme exercise and affirmation of His divine essence”, that act in which is manifest most perfectly the “regnant freedom” that is properly and uniquely his own.\textsuperscript{588} But, therefore also, the Word’s becoming flesh, far from implying alteration and mutability in God, derives from and reveals the immutability of God’s eternal self-determination to humiliation as man – to doing “what he willed to do and actually did do in Jesus Christ”.\textsuperscript{589}

\textsuperscript{585} \textit{CD} 4/1, 164, 193-4, 198.

\textsuperscript{586} \textit{CD} 4/1, 166.

\textsuperscript{587} \textit{CD} 4/2, 84. In the humiliation of the Son of God from virgin birth to the cross, “we have to do with a divine commission and its divine execution, with a divine order and divine obedience ... the divine fulfilment of a divine decree. It takes place in the freedom of God, but in the inner necessity of the freedom of God and not in the play of a sovereign \textit{liberum arbitrium}” (4/1, 195).

\textsuperscript{588} \textit{CD} 4/2, 85; 4/1, 129. Cf., ibid., 185-8, 201, 203-4; 4/2, 42-3.

In regard to this identification of God’s glory with his self-humiliation in Christ, Barth observes that “so far as I know” only Gregory of Nyssa of the Church Fathers “mention[ed] ... that the descent to humility which took place in the incarnation of the Word is not only not excluded by the divine nature but signifies its greatest glory” (CD 4/1, 192). He notes further that his own exposition of the same is an example of his following in the direction in which Nicaea instructs us to move, but also his going “further in this direction, not losing contact with the dogma but ... following our own path” (ibid., 200).

\textsuperscript{589} \textit{CD} 4/2, 85. Cf., “... concretely in His being as man, [God] activates and reveals Himself as divinely free, as the One who loves in His freedom, as the One who is capable of and willing for this inconceivable condescension, and the One who can and wills to be true God not only in the height but also in the depth – in the depth of human creatureliness, sinfulness and mortality” (4/1, 134); also, ibid., 186-7.
We turn now to the second form of the riddle, the exaltation of the Humiliated. How is the humiliation of the Son of God, above all in the passion of Christ, not at odds, essentially, with the royal freedom and activity of the exalted Son of Man? How can divine agency and human agency be not mutually exclusive but complementary and in most perfect unity? The incarnate Word is divinely free – humanly, and therefore humanly free. Without losing anything of himself, God, the Son of God, becomes a creature and is present and active in the concrete, unique, human life-history of Jesus, “under this name and in this form, as distinct from His being in Himself as God and within His activity as Creator and Lord of the World”.

The human existence of the Son of God was no masquerade. He took the place of humanity under judgement “as a man”, in order to reconcile the world to himself not “from without but from within”, as one of us, doing right at the very place where we had done wrong. Where we consistently refuse God’s word of judgement in favour of our own word of self-justification, the man, Jesus, willingly took our place as sinners, confessing our sin as his own, freely offering himself and choosing to suffer the wrath of God, refusing the way of self-justification in favour of his “complete affirmation of ... the execution of judgement in the judging of the Judge ... putting God in the right against Him”. Precisely in this way, from Jordan to Golgotha, Jesus of Nazareth, God incarnate, is humanly free and therefore humanly obedient, his human freedom and obedience exactly corresponding to what we have already observed of the freedom of God as obedience.

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590 CD 4/1, 75, italics added.

591 CD 4/1, 237.

592 CD 4/1, 258, cf., 94-5, 114, 273 (as a summary of the extended discussion, 231-73), 307.

593 CD 4/1, 258-9.

We earlier noted Barth’s emphatic insistence on the complete absence of a natural human capacity for cooperation (even on the part of the humanity assumed by the Son) in God’s work of reconciliation, which is solely God’s work. Analogously, in regard to the specifically human freedom and obedience of Jesus of Nazareth, Barth explains that the faith, love, and hope of the Christian are never
Barth emphasises the distinctively human speaking, willing, acting, suffering, and triumphing of this one man, Jesus of Nazareth, by speaking of his having been “created ‘after God’”, existing as a man analogously, in correspondence and parallel to God’s mode of existence, as human reflection and image of the purpose, work, and attitude of God. This reflects Barth’s emphatic insistence upon the differentiated unity of divine and human being and agency in Jesus Christ, a differentiation which must not be overcome in some kind of higher synthesis, the one absorbing or overwhelming the other, or the two mixed and fused. The being, freedom, and activity of God and the being, freedom, and activity of humanity are one in Jesus Christ, not as the infamous tertium quid, but in the form of a history, the irreducible life-history of Jesus Christ as, at once, “the reconciling God and the man reconciled by God”.

The language of reflection, analogy, and correspondence to describe the relation between the man, Jesus, on earth, and God in heaven must not be taken to imply any gap between the triune God and the person who is Jesus. The irreducible

such as to supplant or even stand beside it as the root and ground of our justification (and sanctification, and vocation). Indeed, the Christian’s faith, love, and hope are what they are in so far as they do not attempt to supplant or supplement, or compare, or cooperate with the justifying, sanctifying, and glorifying work of Jesus but instead look only to and take their stand only upon his unique, unsurpassable, and unsubstitutable being and work (ibid., 94ff, cf., 629ff). That does not rule out an imitatio Christi, specifically in regard to the self-abnegation of the Son as described in Phil 2 (ibid., 634ff), but never as supplement, cooperation, or completion of our justification, sanctification, or glorification once and for all and unsurpassably achieved by Jesus Christ alone (cf., 4/2, 593-5, 603-6).

594 CD 4/2, 166-7, cf., 51.

595 CD 4/1, 130, 137.

596 CD 4/1, 136.

597 CD 4/2, 166-7.
differentiation of deity and humanity in Christ is equally an inseparable union in the personal identity of the second person of the Godhead made flesh. Or to say the same thing differently, Jesus Christ is the sole subject of what takes place in the dual movements that constitute his life history, that from God to humanity and that from humanity to God.\textsuperscript{598}

To return to the distinctively human activity of Jesus, we have seen that the eternal freedom of the Son of God in the mode of God is his willing obedience of the Father. It is not the case that it belongs to God to command but only to the creature to obey. Nonetheless, divinely free in his divine obedience, the reconciliation of the world demanded that the Son of God “had to achieve His freedom and obedience ... as one man with others ... as a link in the chain of enslaved and disobedient humanity”, wrestling with that which assaulted him “as a man with men”.\textsuperscript{599} This makes the Son’s incarnation a new thing, a \textit{novum mysterium}, so that while his \textit{exinanitio} affirms and does not surrender his divine majesty, yet “it is undoubtedly a way into the far country”, into an “alien life”, and as such represents “an inconceivable humiliation, condescension, and self-abasement of God”.\textsuperscript{600}

That alien life is “the poor humanity” of Jesus Christ who carries the easy yoke and light burden of the obedience of the Son.\textsuperscript{601} Freely and willingly this man bears what he has to bear not in wealth and strength but in poverty and weakness, not as one who is victorious but as one who is in submission, as the man who originally and finally assents to and bears and dies on a cross. “‘From the heart’, ... from within, ... of his own

\textsuperscript{598} CD 4/1, 136; 4/2, 6, 19.

\textsuperscript{599} CD 4/1, 216.

\textsuperscript{600} CD 4/1, 171, 199; 4/2, 42.

\textsuperscript{601} CD 4/1, 178.
choice, in free obedience” he lives his human life in obedience to God the Father.\textsuperscript{602} The one and sole subject and agent in all of this is God, the Son of God. Equally, “God acts and suffers when this man acts and suffers as a man”.\textsuperscript{603} And, because God himself is the human subject who is the man Jesus, “the human speaking and acting and suffering and triumphing of this one man directly concerns us all, and His history is our history of salvation which changes the whole human situation”.\textsuperscript{604}

But the second form of the riddle is hardly in evidence yet. Thus far, the humiliation of the Son of God is matched by the humiliation of this poor man, Jesus. The puzzle has begun to appear with talk (in the concluding quotation of my last paragraph) of the “triumphing” of this man. Contrary to what we might have expected, his triumph and exaltation is not the resurrection as the reversal of his humiliation. Rather, all through his life and climactically in the depths of the passion, or in other words exactly coincidental with his most extreme humiliation, he is the exalted and royal man.\textsuperscript{605}

Before we explain how the contradiction is overcome, we must examine more closely the contradiction itself – the royal freedom and activity of the Humiliated. The royal man is the Jesus Christ whose history is attested in the Gospels.\textsuperscript{606} The actual content of the church’s later conceptual formulations, \textit{vere deus} and \textit{vere homo}, is rendered in the speech, action, living, suffering, and dying of the New Testament

\textsuperscript{602} CD 4/1, 179.

\textsuperscript{603} CD 4/2, 51.

\textsuperscript{604} CD 4/2, 51; cf., 4/1, 230.

\textsuperscript{605} “It is the act of the humiliation of the Son of God as such which is the exaltation of the Son of Man, and in Him of human essence” (CD 4/2, 100).

\textsuperscript{606} CD 4/2, 156; cf., 4/1, 127, 136.
Jesus.\textsuperscript{607} The church reads the Gospels (as they were written) in the light of the resurrection and ascension.\textsuperscript{608} Equally, these climactic events must not be allowed to “crowd out His life as it hurried on to His death”.\textsuperscript{609} The risen and ascended Lord and, more specifically in terms of our present concern, the royal man, is none other than the man who made his way from Bethlehem to Golgotha, “the one who was finally crucified”.\textsuperscript{610}

Who is he to whom the Gospels attest? He is a free man.\textsuperscript{611} His freedom consists in his being at once subject to all the constraints of fallen human existence, exactly as we are, and yet, unlike us, not subject to them. To be sure, he is a creature who is bound by sin, suffers, and actually dies. But, he is superior to, lifted above and triumphant over, his creatureliness, sin, suffering, and death.\textsuperscript{612}

We must not be misled by the language of ‘lifted above’ and ‘superior to’ into thinking Jesus floated free, or existed at one remove, from his humanity. On the contrary, it is in the midst of human limitation and suffering, his own as well as others’, that he is free. So, for example, he is bound by sin but “not bound to commit it”.\textsuperscript{613} He

\textsuperscript{607} CD 4/1, 127, 136; 4/2, 156.

\textsuperscript{608} The exercise of considering “the pre-Easter prelude in abstraction from its Easter sequel” would be “valueless” and “obscur[ing]” (CD 4/2, 156).

\textsuperscript{609} CD 4/2, 164.

\textsuperscript{610} CD 4/2, 164, cf., 117-18, 249-50; also, 4/1, 135, 163.

\textsuperscript{611} Indeed, he is the free man, the only free man, and the one in whom the rest of us are set free (CD 4/1, 131).

\textsuperscript{612} CD 4/1, 131.

\textsuperscript{613} CD 4/1, 131.
suffers and is “able to minister to Himself and others”.\textsuperscript{614} He dies, and “in dying” triumphs over death.\textsuperscript{615} The simultaneity of the two status (exaltation and humiliation) is in dramatic evidence here. The man Jesus is powerful (indeed, “omnipotent”) precisely in his weakness and impotence, glorious in his lowliness and shame, altogether free in his servitude, victorious in his defeat.\textsuperscript{616}

The second form of the riddle, the exaltation of the Humiliated, is provocatively intensified by this series of juxtapositions. Without resolving the contradiction, Barth insists that, as with its first form, we must press through to its overcoming. That entails expounding the manner, the dynamics, of Jesus’ human freedom in the midst of his creaturely limitations, suffering, and dying.

We observe first its trinitarian dimensions. The man Jesus is free in that he lives from and in the “good pleasure”, the “inflexible yes”, and the “inexhaustible blessing and enlightenment” of his heavenly Father.\textsuperscript{617} Equally, he is free in the “comfort, power, and direction” of the Holy Spirit by whom he is inwardly impelled.\textsuperscript{618} Together, these constitute the genuineness of his humanity. “In the deepest sense”, he lives his human life in light of, informed and determined by, the electing grace of God addressed to the world; and he does so uniquely and exclusively.\textsuperscript{619} This grace of God is not in

\textsuperscript{614} CD 4/1, 135.

\textsuperscript{615} CD 4/1, 131.

\textsuperscript{616} CD 4/1, 132, cf., 134-5; 4/2, 167.

\textsuperscript{617} CD 4/2, 94.

\textsuperscript{618} CD 4/2, 94. “[T]he Son of the Father becomes a guest in the world under [the Father’s] unqualified Yes and wholly participant in His Spirit” (ibid., 96). “[C]oncretely [‘He derives wholly’] from the will of the Father who sends Him, the Son who obeys, and the Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son; from the act which executes this will” (ibid., 90).

\textsuperscript{619} CD 4/2, 89.
Jesus as a *habitus*, nor does it “invade or violate” his humanity.\(^{620}\) Rather, as one who exists humanly in a concrete history, the Father’s yes and the Spirit’s power are received by him step by step along the way, representing to him “something new and specific at every step”\(^ {621}\).

The triune dimensions of his human existence elicit from him his response of “grateful affirmation”,\(^ {622}\) in explicit acclamations\(^ {623}\) and in his consistent acceptance of the promise and command contained in the Father’s yes. In other words, his gratitude informs the particular “human being, thinking, willing, speaking, and acting” of his daily existence.\(^ {624}\) Free by virtue of his living from and in the gracious promise and command of the Father, Jesus is willingly obedient. Indeed, his obedience is his “exercise” of his “true human freedom”, and as such the “basic exaltation of His human freedom to its truth”.\(^ {625}\) Again, we are not talking here about a “condition” of his humanity or a superhuman quality added to it, but of his concrete “life-act” in which from the beginning he neither willed to, nor did, sin.\(^ {626}\)

\(^{620}\) *CD* 4/2, 94-5.

\(^{621}\) *CD* 4/2, 94.

\(^{622}\) *CD* 4/2, 30.

\(^{623}\) E.g., Mt.11.25 (*CD* 4/1, 178).

\(^{624}\) *CD* 4/2, 30; cf., 4/1, 14-15, 41-2, 113.

\(^{625}\) *CD* 4/2, 92.

\(^{626}\) *CD* 4/2, 92.
Barth explains all of this in terms of “the grace of His origin”.627 We remind ourselves that the subject in all of this is God, the Son of God. Human nature as such, even Jesus’, is not capable of true freedom. “It does need the exaltation of our nature by the unique grace of God becoming man to ... introduce this living Son of Man in genuine freedom”.628 Constituted by this grace of his origin, Jesus lives his life in “genuine human freedom”, which is “the freedom of obedience”.629

Ours is a counterfeit freedom that is no freedom, “our servum arbitrium”, according to which we live in self-contradiction, not acting freely but “as ... possessed”, choosing evil.630 Jesus, having taken our self-contradiction to himself and opposed to it “a superior contradiction”, step by step and in diverse ways deliberately and resolutely overcomes and resolves it.631

Again, it is the grace of God addressed to him that qualifies him to overcome precisely where we ourselves are overcome. His graced freedom is exercised with power, and that in a double sense. He is empowered effectively to execute human activity that corresponds to and attests the power of God: attests it, but without being identical to it. The Word made flesh accomplishes the reconciliation of the world “not

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627 CD 4/2, 91. The grace of his origin is equally the grace of God addressed to him.

628 CD 4/2, 93.

629 CD 4/2, 93.

630 CD 4/2, 93.

631 CD 4/2, 93. The contrast between our counterfeit freedom that chooses evil and Jesus’ freedom for obedience informs Barth’s description of the latter as freedom, not for choice, but for decision (4/1, 43-4; God in Action, 9). Equally, he can speak of Jesus’ choosing obedience, though by virtue of the grace of God he chooses obedience “not knowing or having any other freedom” (4/2, 93).
... in the nakedness of his divine power” but by effective human activity.\textsuperscript{632} In this first sense, Jesus’ human power is “force”, \textit{potentia}.\textsuperscript{633}

But he is also, again by the grace of God, possessed of power as authority, \textit{exousia}; not the authority of “his naked Godhead”, but “human authority” which attests his divine authority.\textsuperscript{634} Under the conditions of human existence, as an embodied soul possessed of human reason, will, obedience, humility, seriousness, anger, anxiety, trust, and love, Jesus legitimately and eternally attests and accomplishes in altogether human terms our salvation, the “for God and for us’ of the eternal Son”.\textsuperscript{635} The \textit{exousia}, the eternal and salvific legitimacy, of his human activity is not, nor ever becomes, a natural attribute of Jesus’ humanity. It is not the supreme form, different only in degree, of creaturely authority as such. In the historical unfolding of his life, it comes to him and is received by him as the ever-new grace of the Father in the Spirit.\textsuperscript{636} Accordingly, the altogether human life-act of Jesus “acquires even in its pure creatureliness divine \textit{exousia}, even in its human weakness divine power, even in its human meanness divine authority, even in its human particularity (for individuality with all its limitations belongs to its humanity) divine universality – and all this ... as Jesus Christ ... lived and lives and will live”.\textsuperscript{637}

\textsuperscript{632} \textit{CD} 4/2, 97.

\textsuperscript{633} \textit{CD} 4/2, 96.

\textsuperscript{634} \textit{CD} 4/2, 98.

\textsuperscript{635} \textit{CD} 4/2, 98-9. “The speaking and acting, suffering and striving, praying and helping, succumbing and conquering have all to be in human terms .... The saving act of God takes place in the man Jesus of Nazareth” (ibid., 99).

\textsuperscript{636} It is just this that renders all biographical and artistic representations of Jesus problematic: “what will always escape [them] ... what their work will always lack, is the decisive thing – the vertical movement in which Jesus Christ is actual, the history in which the Son of God becomes the Son of Man and takes human essence and is man in this act” (\textit{CD} 4/2, 102).

\textsuperscript{637} \textit{CD} 4/2, 99.
Lest this last sentence be misunderstood, we must repeat that Jesus, the royal man, the exalted Son of Man, “did not enjoy or exercise divine sovereignty, or authority, or omnipotence”. He was “its full and direct witness”, but as a free man whose freedom was precisely his readiness to do the will of his Father. Constrained by nothing either outwardly or inwardly, for him there was only that “one imperative”. Subject to it alone he went his human way “with absolute superiority, disposing and controlling, speaking and keeping silence, always exercising lordship”. He is subject to that one imperative, but not as subservient to an alien demand, as to something imposed from outside. Rather, opening up a new and completely different arena of human activity, he lives a truly human life, truly human because lived in “free, spontaneous, inward agreement” with the will and activity of God. This, his royal and exalted freedom, renders him among us as one who serves, the servant of God and our servant.

We saw earlier that Jesus willingly takes his place under the verdict and judgment of God. We have seen further that he lives under the direction of God. In both of these he is the object of the Father’s love. “Beyond that”, however, he lives at the Father’s side, participating in his being and work, not only responsible to him, but responsible for his cause. He is servant, friend, and child. But as such, he is more. He is the Lord, the “Ruler in [God’s] kingdom”, the royal and exalted man.

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638 CD 4/2, 161, and all further quotations in this paragraph, unless otherwise indicated.

639 CD 4/2, 30.

640 CD 4/1, 115.

641 CD 4/1, 115.
As this man, he invades and conquers all that stands in opposition to God and his creation. His assault has two aspects to it. In the first place, as the “primary and controlling aspect of His life-act”, is his Word, a “human word”, whereby he wrests the human creature away from the tyranny of the evil one for sole allegiance to himself. His word achieves his liberating purpose by laying claim not merely to the mind, either as “theoretical or practical understanding”, but to the will, “to obedient volition ... to the total obedience of repentance”.

Always accompanying his Word, as its enactment, are his deeds of power, the miracles. By them, “Jesus ... the man ... put His proclamation into practice”. They constitute the second aspect of his assault. Especially in their most offensive form, the raisings from the dead and the exorcisms, they demonstrate the identity of the temporal human history of Jesus with the once for all event of “the divine coup d'état”. The realm of darkness, the reign of death, the “entanglement and humiliation and distress and shame” which characterise the general course of things, all that attacks and frustrates the natural existence of humanity and the cosmos – are engaged, attacked, strictly repudiated, and negated by Jesus in miracle after miracle. And Jesus acts in the name not of “a neutral force or omnipotence” but of the sovereign power of God’s

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642 CD 4/2, 30.

643 CD 4/2, 194.

644 CD 4/2, 198, 200. See the whole section, ibid., 194-209.

645 CD 4/2, 247.

646 CD 4/2, 209.

mercy, mercy that is not quiescent but active on behalf of humanity and therefore
defiant against all its enemies.648

Again and again Jesus takes up the battle “at the point where a definite decision
must be made”, and makes it “in the power of his solitary Yes to the omnipotent mercy
of God”, revealing the victory of the kingdom of God against nothingness and the chaos
negated by God.649 Jesus’ sharp defence of his “positive freedom” to work on the
Sabbath as also his tears at Lazarus’ tomb reflect the severity of the assault in which he
is engaged, and also the vexation of “the indwelling Father” who himself, in Jesus’
miracles, attacks and frustrates the rule of death in the cosmos.650 The man Jesus
comes to the help of suffering creatures, not taking into account their sin, simply and
exclusively because this is God’s good will for them.651

What though of Golgotha? How are the two states of humiliation and exaltation
simultaneously in evidence in the crucified Jesus? How is he there, and even most
emphatically there, the exalted Son of Man? More specifically for our purposes, how
does the extremity of his passion confirm and not negate his royal freedom? As was the
case in its first form, so here the riddle is at its most severe and the challenge to
overcome it at its most demanding. For, “His death is a problem of the first
magnitude”.652 The New Testament represents it as such and draws our attention to it.

648 CD 4/2, 232.


651 “It is gloriously free grace in which the man Jesus acts and which is active and revealed in His action
as the truth and reality of God Himself” (CD 4/2, 232). Jesus “was the man who put his proclamation
into practice in these acts [his miracles] thus characterising it as the proclamation of ... the
superabounding free grace of God” (ibid., 247).

652 CD 4/2, 250.
Most remarkably, Jesus himself is represented wrestling with it, and in the “strongest possible terms, as in the Gethsemane passages”. He is going into darkness so final that he cannot see his way through it but must traverse it as through a tunnel. Yet, through it all, the initiative remains with him. The Gospels never portray him as overtaken by or entangled in tragedy and misfortune perhaps partially induced by his own error or guilt. Led away to his death, he consents to go every step of the way “of his own free will”. His is “a terrified and determined assent”, as Gethsemane and the cry of desolation make vividly evident. But he gives his consent not to “an alien necessity”, nor to an inescapable “cosmic law”, nor in contradiction to the whole tenor of his life up to the passion. Going into the total darkness of his end he goes deliberately to the Father, “to the One who sent Him”, who commissioned him to “discharge ... his royal office” in this final act of perfect obedience.

Again then, as with the riddle in its first form, it is the sovereign will of God the Father and the uninterrupted obedience of Jesus that overcomes the antithesis and accomplishes the exaltation of the Humiliated. “Jesus was not led to this place, nor did He go to this place, in contradiction of the fact that He was the royal man. On the

\[653\text{ CD 4/2, 250.}\]

\[654\text{ CD 4/2, 251.}\]

\[655\text{ CD 4/2, 249. “The risen and living and exalted Jesus is for them [the Gospels] in His totality the man who was led away into the shadow, who Himself went away into it with uplifted head” (ibid., 249-50).}\]

\[656\text{ CD 4/2, 252.}\]

\[657\text{ CD 4/2, 255, cf., 252.}\]

\[658\text{ CD 4/2, 255-6. Barth comments on John19.30 (“It is finished” and the bowing of his head): “It was in this way, in this absolute fulfilment, that He now bowed His head, not before men, or death, but before the Father whose commission He had executed to the letter” (ibid., 256).}\]
contrary, it was in a sense His coronation as this man”.\textsuperscript{659} To repeat, his exaltation is not achieved subsequent to his death, in his resurrection. Rather, the resurrection reveals the secret of his whole life and most especially of his death, namely, that “in the deepest darkness of Golgotha He enters supremely into the glory of the unity of the Son with the Father”, so that precisely “in [his] abandonment by God He is the One who is directly loved by God”.\textsuperscript{660}

Barth emphasises the coincidence of God’s will and the human willingness of Jesus. Jesus’ “self-determination” to the cross as the outcome of his life, the “readiness and willingness” with which he lives his life even unto death, reflect and even are “the divine order which controls His life and its course”.\textsuperscript{661} “He fulfils voluntarily that which is resolved concerning Him” and thereby what the New Testament calls the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God “are executed with the perfection appropriate to a divine decree”.\textsuperscript{662}

With a view to a still fuller appreciation of the dynamics of Jesus freedom, more specifically in terms of the coincidence of divine and human agencies, I turn to Barth’s treatment of what he calls “the awakening to conversion”.\textsuperscript{663} In very brief, the phrase is descriptive of the human act of halting, turning, and advancing that corresponds to the divine summons to halt and advance. Near the end of his extended discussion of the

\textsuperscript{659} CD 4/2, 252.

\textsuperscript{660} CD 4/2, 252. “[T]he exaltation of the One who humiliated Himself in obedience (Phil 2.9) is not the divine act towards this man which takes place after His humiliation, but that which takes place in and with His humiliation” (ibid., 256).

\textsuperscript{661} CD 4/2, 258-9. Jesus’ self-determination to the cross is eloquently evident in his call of Judas to be an apostle. “He could hardly have integrated His self-offering more clearly into His life’s work than by bringing His ‘paradous’ into this orderly association with Himself” (ibid., 259).

\textsuperscript{662} CD 4/2, 260.

\textsuperscript{663} CD 4/2, 553-84.
phenomenon, he asks, “Who is the man of whom we have spoken continuously as the one who is engaged in conversion?” It is Jesus Christ, himself. The awakening to conversion “is an actual event ... in His life, in His obedience as the true Son of God and true Son of Man”. Not only has he received the summons to halt and advance “primarily and properly and directly from God”; he has also “properly and immediately and perfectly fulfilled it as a man, accomplishing it in the act of his own life and death”.

Familiar themes recur here. The awakening is wholly human and wholly divine, but asymmetrically. There is no question of “a coordination between two comparable elements”, but of the absolute primacy of God. All “creaturely factors and their motions”, including specifically, human agency, are not at all “impaired”, but given by God “a special function or character”. They are qualified and claimed by God “for co-operation”, possessed and disposed of, used by God, as his “organ and instrument”. No longer belonging to ourselves, we belong to God, the God who is for us so that we are for God.

664 CD 4/2, 582.
665 CD 4/2, 582.
666 CD 4/2, 582.
667 CD 4/2, 557.
668 CD 4/2, 557.
669 CD 4/2, 557, cf., 561.
670 “The reality that God is for him and he is for God” is the “two-fold ‘for’ – the second grounded in the first”, the revelation of which awakens us to conversion (CD 4/2, 560-1).
These are familiar themes. A little later in the discussion Barth rehearses the same material with what he calls “some elucidations”.671 Without backing away one iota from his earlier attribution of the movement of conversion wholly to the action of God, he is nevertheless careful to define himself over against every description of the omnipotence of God as a magical or mechanical force that relates to the human creature as a mere object, “an alien body, which is either carried or impelled, like a spar of wood carried relentlessly downstream by a great river”.672 No, the omnipotence of God is the omnipotence of his mercy, of his Holy Spirit, which liberates the human creature, converting them “to being and action in the freedom which [they] are given by God”.673

Not that human creatures choose to be converted. No such choice is available to them, for they are bound, vegetating to death “under a hellish compulsion, in a true comparison with the driftwood carried downstream”.674 The Spirit “creates and effects” a new ability to will and to be able actually to decide for God.675 To say it even more concretely, the dynamic at the heart of this movement from slavery to freedom is the truth of the gospel, that God is for the creature.676 That truth, indeed that God who is Emmanuel, “reveals itself to man” with compelling, liberating power, not merely setting the creature before the possibility of a corresponding decision, but

671 CD 4/2, 578.

672 CD 4/2, 578.

673 CD 4/2, 578.

674 CD 4/2, 578.

675 CD 4/2, 578.

676 CD 4/2, 579.
accomplishing it, making it real, “directly causing it to take place”.\textsuperscript{677} God speaks his Yes to us where we say our No to him, putting to silence our No, and setting his Yes in our heart and on our lips. He loves us while yet we are his enemies and thereby makes us his friends who love him in return.\textsuperscript{678} Created, effected, accomplished by God alone, the liberated human creature is no automaton, but (and it is the omnipotence of the living God that He is willing and able to and actually does effect precisely this) one who is now permitted and enabled to live “wholly of himself and be a man”.\textsuperscript{679} God’s gift of freedom becomes for the creature the law of his own being, “the law of his own free act”.\textsuperscript{680} As the law of the Spirit of life it liberates so as “genuinely to bind and engage” the creature for that willing obedience to God that, as we have seen before, is true freedom.\textsuperscript{681}

Anything less than that, and the truth would be but an “abstract law” and “arid claim” which could never set us free.\textsuperscript{682} As it is, it has its “\textit{locus} in a life fulfilling and embodying it”, in the life of the obedient servant, who is awakened to conversion and who lives for the God who has revealed himself to be for her.\textsuperscript{683} Derivatively, that locus is in the life of the christian disciple. Primarily, and in uniquely “exemplary” fashion, it

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\textsuperscript{677} CD 4/2, 579.
\textsuperscript{678} CD 4/2, 580.
\textsuperscript{679} CD 4/2, 578.
\textsuperscript{680} CD 4/2, 580.
\textsuperscript{681} CD 4/2, 580.
\textsuperscript{682} CD 4/2, 579.
\textsuperscript{683} CD 4/2, 580.
is in the life of the Son of God made flesh, the man Jesus. He it is who in and throughout his own life enacts the awakening to conversion to the freedom of obedience, even unto death. If it seems inappropriate to speak of the one who did no sin as himself awakened to conversion, we may recall Barth’s earlier treatment of the sinlessness of Jesus as, not a state or habitus, but an ever renewed decision step by step all along the way to refuse the way of rebellion in favour of assent to the Father’s will, again and again contradicting our consistent contradiction of the will of God. His continuous and very real and (as in the wilderness and Gethsemane) costly deciding for God is at the heart of what awakening to conversion is all about.

In bringing the awakening to conversion to fulfillment in his own life, Jesus is the “real fact”, the “real and incontestably objective event”, in whom it is revealed that God is for the human creature and the human creature is for God. And it is effectively revealed in him, for his life-act is the “potent truth in the work of the Holy Spirit” that awakens us to conversion, liberating us for obedience to God. He, the Son of God “to whom it was proper to exist in the form and majesty of God”, lived his altogether human life “in the form and lowliness of a doulos engaged only to obedience” – accomplishing and bringing to fulfillment the awakening to conversion in himself – “in order that as such He might be distinguished by the name of Kyrios”.


685 CD 4/2, 582.

686 CD 4/2, 581-2. Indeed, “He is ... the one in whom the world and man have been and are converted to God” (4/1, 126).

687 CD 4/2, 581. “In so far as He was and is and will be very man, the conversion of man to God took place in Him, the turning and therefore the reconciliation of all men, the fulfilment of the covenant” (4/1, 132).

688 CD 4/3, 601, italics added.
again, and the as such emphasises it, the double states of humiliation and exaltation are simultaneous, the riddle of their coincidence overcome by the willing obedience of the one who is at once humiliated Son of God and exalted man. The obedient and lowly servant is, as such, the exemplary and exalted Kyrios who with royal freedom effectively awakens to conversion his fellow human creatures.

The Mutual Participation of Divine and Human Agencies in Christ

In turning to this fourth section we do not leave behind the earlier material but bring it to its proper conclusion. It must come as no surprise to anyone even minimally acquainted with Barth that the non-competitive relationship of God and created reality is enacted uniquely in Jesus Christ. My exposition of this thesis will serve as conclusion to all that has gone before by making explicit what has been everywhere implicit, namely (Barth calls this the third christological aspect), the concrete unity of the Exalted who is the humiliated Son of God (the first christological aspect) and the Humiliated who is the exalted Son of Man (the second christological aspect) in the one “God-man”, Jesus Christ.689

God and the creature are non-competitively related in Jesus Christ, that is, in the event, the concrete existence, the particular history of this man, and nowhere else. He is, in his history as God, as man, and as the God-man, not merely the means to or the possibility of, but in actuality, atonement, “the completed act of the reconciliation of man and God” – its beginning, middle, and end.690 In Jesus Christ it is revealed that

689 CD 4/1, 135.

690 CD 4/1, 126. See whole discussion, ibid., 125-7; also, 4/2, 61, 63; God in Action, 11-12. “In all three [christological aspects] we must ensure that Jesus Christ is constantly known and revealed as the One and the All that is expounded. He is the One who justifies, sanctifies and calls. He is ... the subject of the whole occurrence, the autor and applicator salutis ...” (4/1, 147).
God and creation are not in competition because God has, in the Word made flesh, reconciled to himself his otherwise rebelliously disposed human covenant partner. In Adam, and with increased intensity in Israel, there is only the severest “antithesis” and hostility, a “fatal controversy”, between the faithful God and unfaithful humanity, though it must also be said that already in Israel the enmity is en route to its being overcome in the redemption and reconciliation that are the presupposition and goal of God’s covenant with Israel. The new covenant in Jesus Christ (as the fulfillment of God’s covenant with Israel) exhaustively constitutes the non-competitive relationship between God and creation.

I have already said that this non-competitive relationship is in Christ and nowhere else. Especially is this the case where one might have thought otherwise, namely, in the church and in believers. The subjective appropriation of the reconciliation of God and humanity in Christ is the work of God the Holy Spirit. For, “He [Jesus Christ] who is by the Holy Spirit is also known by the same Spirit”. And the witness of the Spirit is nothing other than “the event of His [Christ’s] own self-exposition as it corresponds to the event of His existence”.

691 CD 4/1, 19, 138-9.
692 CD 4/1, 33-4; 4/2, 61; cf., 4/1, 10-12; 4/2, 3, 103; God in Action, 9-12.
693 CD 4/1, 34. It is beyond the scope of this thesis, but we note that this is in very brief the force of Barth’s double assertion that creation is the external basis of the covenant and the covenant the internal basis of creation (Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol. 3, The Doctrine of Creation, Pt. 1, ed. G. W. Bromiley & T. F. Torrance, trans. J. W. Edwards et al. [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958], 94ff, 228ff).
694 See, CD 4/1, 22-34, where the new covenant fulfils not only the covenant with Israel but also the Noachic covenant. Also, “... salvation ... is the original and basic will of God, the ground and purpose of His will as Creator” (ibid., 9; cf., 10, 19).
695 CD 4/2, 39.
696 CD 4/2, 39.
subjective appropriation renders the human creature ec-centric and ec-static, her ground and center in Jesus Christ alone.

This explains how it is that Jesus while being like us in every respect is also and as profoundly unlike us;697 unlike us not merely in degree, but “qualitatively”.698 He is unique. His history “cannot be that of any other man”.699 And that, not as the same can be said of anyone, but because in his history our humanity was assumed by him who is the Word made flesh, and exalted to a perfect partnership with God in free obedience.700 He alone, in his unique history, exalts His and our humanity precisely in and with his activity as “the humiliated Son of God, the Lord who became a servant”.701 “No one beside Him is man in this way”.702 It is not for us to repeat his achievement. Indeed, it is not in us to do so. “We cannot produce it of ourselves”.703 Rather (as we earlier observed), christian existence is ec-centric, lived by faith in the achievement that is exclusively Christ’s.704 In terms of our present theme, the non-competitive, covenant

697 “… completely like … completely unlike …” (CD 4/2, 27); “… so different … perfectly identical …” (4/1, 54, cf., 12-13).

698 CD 4/2, 28, cf., 30, 166; 4/1, 160.

699 CD 4/2, 28.

700 CD 4/1, 12-13; CD 4/2, 28, 117.

701 CD 4/2, 28.

702 CD 4/1, 115.

703 CD 4/1, 137.

704 “Faith lives by its object, love by its basis, hope by its surety. Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit is this object and basis and surety” (CD 4/1, 154).
relationship of God and humanity is in Christ alone, and never drifts free of him to become a discrete reality possessed by church or believer.\(^{705}\)

Neither is Christ merely the means to the recovery of an inherent relationship with God that is always there but, since the fall, dormant, blocked, distorted and now through Christ set free for our rediscovery. We have already taken note of Barth’s criticism of Schleiermacher in this respect, whose genius brought to its logical conclusion theology and atonement understood as “the self-interpretation of ... the *homo religiosus incurvatus in se*”.\(^{706}\) In this context, we may usefully take note of Barth’s treatment of the *imago dei* in relation specifically to the double agency of Christ.

Within the world which God has created there is “His elect creature ... man” who, in his identity as man and woman, reflects the being of God.\(^{707}\) That reflection is twofold: first, as the image of God *ad extra*, the God who wills to be God together with his creature as his creature’s God; but second, as the reflection of God’s own inner life, the “otherness”, the “being in antithesis to Himself”, his own “existence in coexistence” that is “the original and essential determination of His being”.\(^{708}\) In creation, God graciously grants and permits humanity *qua* humanity to play a role in “the history in which He is God”, to be the reflection of his relation both to the creature and even more

\(^{705}\) “We shall speak correctly of the faith and love and hope of the individual Christian only when it remains clear and constantly becomes clear that, although we are dealing with our existence, we are dealing with our existence in Jesus Christ as our true existence, that we are therefore dealing with him and not with us, and with us only in so far as absolutely and exclusively with Him” (*CD* 4/1, 154). With respect to the church, “... faith and love and hope ... are all His [Christ’s] work, and His work first in the community of God, and only then His work in individual Christians” (ibid., 154).

\(^{706}\) *CD* 4/1, 153.

\(^{707}\) *CD* 4/1, 201.

\(^{708}\) *CD* 4/1, 201.
profoundly to himself in his own inner life.\textsuperscript{709} As the fulfillment of his work of creation, God grants to humanity a further and final role in God’s own history by himself becoming a man, the man Jesus of Nazareth. Here again, as with creation, the incarnation has its basis in God’s own inner life. But, whereas the human creature reflects God’s relationships \textit{ad extra} and \textit{ad intra}, Jesus is identical with them. The obedience of the man Jesus to the Father who sent him (as we have already observed in our exposition of the Son’s kenosis) essentially corresponds to “the inward divine relationship between the One who rules and commands in majesty and the One who obeys in humility”.\textsuperscript{710} The eternal relation of God the Father and God the Son is “identical with the very different relationship between God and one of his creatures, a man”.\textsuperscript{711}

Reconciliation is not therefore the consummation of the \textit{imago dei} if by that we understand it to be an act of mutual cooperation between the man Jesus autonomously exercising an inherently (by virtue of the created \textit{imago}) cooperative human agency in response to, even in reflection of, the conciliatory divine agency of God the Father. So to describe it would make reconciliation in Christ a matter not only of two wills but also of two agents. It is in fact accomplished through the coincidence of two agencies, divine and human, possessed and exercised by one and the same agent, the God-man, Jesus Christ. It is “the free grace of the atonement” that God goes beyond (without contradicting or setting aside) his creative act in which he brought into being another as his counterpart and reflection, and himself becomes a man to enact, in the creaturely realm as a human creature within the limits of creaturely existence, his own inner life, causing “his inner being as God ... to take outward form in itself and as such”.\textsuperscript{712} For

\textsuperscript{709} \textit{CD} 4/1, 203.

\textsuperscript{710} \textit{CD} 4/1, 203.

\textsuperscript{711} \textit{CD} 4/1, 203.

\textsuperscript{712} \textit{CD} 4/1, 204. We may say then that the difference between the \textit{imago dei} in creation and Jesus Christ as \textit{imago dei} is the difference between \textit{imago} as reflection of another and \textit{imago} as identical with that of
the salvation of the world, “in His mode of being as the One who is obedient in humility, [God] wills to be not only the one God but this man, and this man as the one God”.713

We have said that the non-competitive relationship between God and created reality is found in Christ alone and nowhere else. In concluding this discussion we must return to its beginning and the concreteness of this ‘in Christ alone’ and therefore also of this ‘non-competitive relationship’. The two phrases refer to a unique event, namely, the particular history of the man, Jesus. As we have observed, that event has an irreducibly double character.714 It remains to address what has been everywhere which it is the image. Though, we must qualify our use of “identical” here. The identity includes difference (as is evident in the sentence that concludes my previous paragraph). As we saw earlier, the power which the incarnate Son of God, the royal man Jesus, exercises is not that of his naked Godhead, that proper to his mode of being as God, but a human power that corresponds to and attests the power of God. That being said, in this passage (ibid., 201-4) Barth’s emphasis is on the identity between Jesus as imago and the inner life of God which, as we have just seen, “in itself and as such” is manifest in him.

In an earlier volume, this same identity that includes difference is examined, though initially at least with much greater emphasis on the difference, even to the point of saying that it is only God’s relationship ad extra and not his inner life that is reflected in Jesus as the imago dei. “It [the humanity of Jesus] does not present God in Himself and in His relation to Himself, but in His relation to the reality distinct from Himself. In it we have to do with God and man rather than God and God. There is real difference in this respect. We cannot, therefore expect more than correspondence and similarity. We cannot maintain identity” ((Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol. 3, The Doctrine of Creation, Pt. 2, ed. G. W. Bromiley & T. F. Torrance, trans. H. Knight et al. [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960], 219 [hereafter cited as, CD 3/2]). That being said, Barth goes on to explain the “indirect identity” which the term, correspondence, is meant to denote (ibid., 219). It is not a correspondence of being, “an analogia entis” (ibid., 220). The being of God and human being (even as assumed by the Son) are incomparable. Nonetheless, the inner relations of the persons of the Godhead and the relation between God and the human in Jesus are analogous: “There is an analogia relationis” (ibid., 220). Specifically, the freedom of God that determines his intra-trinitarian relationships is “the same freedom as that in which He is the Creator of man, in which man may be His creature, and in which the Creator-creature relationship is established by the Creator” (ibid., 220). Likewise, the same eternal love constitutes God’s relationships ad intra and ad extra (ibid., 220). The humanity of Jesus “follows”, as its “direct correlative”, the inner being of God, and (here the shift in emphasis towards identity compares with what we have seen in the later passage, 4/1, 201ff, while coming close to contradicting the rigorous denials early in this present text) “it is this inner being which takes this form ad extra in the humanity of Jesus, and in this form, for all the disparity of sphere and object, remains true to itself and therefore reflects itself” (CD 3/2, 220).

713 CD 4/1, 204.

714 Briefly to reiterate: the divine and the human are one in Jesus Christ, not in one form but in two, as the humiliation of God and as the exaltation of humanity.
implicit (even at times explicit) in our discussion, that the two movements “from God to man” and “from reconciled man to God” are brought together in a complete unity in the life-history of Jesus of Nazareth.\textsuperscript{715} Indeed, “He Himself is the subject of what takes place on these two lines”.\textsuperscript{716} As the one who acts and speaks in his own history, he himself is the reconciling God and the reconciled human creature.\textsuperscript{717} He himself “accomplishes and guarantees” God’s reconciliation of the world to himself.\textsuperscript{718} Not only is the reconciliatory turning of God to the world and the conversion of the human creature to God “actualised and revealed” in him.\textsuperscript{719} He himself actualises, accomplishes, and reveals it from both sides.

He does so without compromise to either side whilst at the same time leaving no aspect of human nature unaffected by its union with and “participation in” his deity.\textsuperscript{720} As God, and to the attainment of God’s full glory, Jesus exercises his divine mercy and electing grace. As a man he attains the full glory of what it is to be human in receiving and being wholly determined by that same mercy and electing grace of God.\textsuperscript{721} The

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{715} CD 4/2, 6; cf., 4/1, 122-3, 126, 136.
  \item \textsuperscript{716} CD 4/1, 136. “Reconciliation … has to do wholly and utterly with Jesus Christ …. He is the active Subject …” (ibid., 125); also, 4/2, 193.
  \item \textsuperscript{717} CD 4/1, 136.
  \item \textsuperscript{718} CD 4/1, 158.
  \item \textsuperscript{719} CD 4/1, 122.
  \item \textsuperscript{720} CD 4/2, 64.
  \item \textsuperscript{721} CD 4/2, 75, 88. In the “language of the older dogmatics” this constitutes the \textit{communicatio gratiarum} (God’s “grace and its gifts addressed to [human nature]”), which in Barth’s view and contrary
“mutual participation” of God and humanity in a relation of real giving by God and willing and continuous reception by his human partner exactly constitutes what it is “to see and think and say Jesus Christ”.722

Pressing still further the concreteness of the union of God and humanity in Jesus Christ, it is neither deity nor humanness nor their union that is the active agent in the reconciliation of the world, but Jesus Christ who enacts his personal identity divinely and humanly.723 The two natures are each possessed of their own activities or agencies (in the language of the tradition, their own energies and wills). But neither is its own actor or agent. So that, “what is done by the two natures as predicates of this subject ['the person of the one Jesus Christ'] can only be called an action which is not autonomous but serves and accomplishes its ['this subject’s', not, I think, each nature’s] working”.724

to the “older Lutherans” exhausts what is denoted by the concept of the communicatio idiomatum that need not be supplemented by “the impartation and appropriation of the distinctive qualities of the divine nature to the human, and therefore in its divinisation” (ibid., 88). The grace of God determines but does not divinise human nature so that “it is always human essence”: in Christ, “it will be the humanity of God. But it will still be humanity and not deity” (ibid., 72). “In Jesus Christ there is no direct or indirect identification, but the effective confrontation, not only of the divine with the human, but also of the human with the divine essence, and therefore the determination of the relationship ... which ... takes place in this confrontation” (ibid., 87).

For a thorough and nuanced analysis of Barth’s creative deployment of reformed scholastic categories and distinctions, see Paul Dafydd Jones, The Humanity of Christ: Christology in Karl Barth’s Church Dogmatics [London: T&T Clark, 2008], 134-150, 267-269 (hereafter, Jones, Humanity of Christ).

722 CD 4/2, 65, 74. The receptivity of Christ’s humanity must not be understood in such a way as to compromise the contributory activity of that same humanity in upholding the unity and simplicity of Christ’s personal identity: “… Christ qua human is given, receives and then acts to affirm and uphold the simple identity definitive of his person. Christ’s human essence does its ‘bit’ to ensure that Christ is the person that God wills him to be and that he is – the Word incarnate” (Jones, Humanity of Christ, 133).

723 CD 4/2, 105.

724 CD 4/2, 105. This in very brief is what is meant by the communicatio operationum, the concept which in common with Reformed scholastics Barth prefers (in accounting for the unconfused unity of the two natures in Christ) to the communicatio idiomatum, favoured by the Lutherans (ibid., 104-5).
It is Jesus as acting subject who unites the activities of his two natures in their “common actualization”.725 In uniting them he preserves the distinctiveness of each even as he exercises them “at one and the same time” in “a common action”.726 This union without confusion, and difference without separation, can only be thought historically – as the conceptual exposition of the life-history of Jesus. As such, it describes not merely the “conjunction” but “the strictest relationship” between deity and humanity in the person and work of Jesus.727 In the first place, authority, revelation, and donation belong to his deity, while service, witness, and receptive mediation characterise his humanity.728 But secondly and of equal importance (and indeed implicit in the foregoing), as mutually participant, each is never without the other but is exercised in relation to the other: “the divine expresses and reveals itself wholly in the sphere of the human, and the human serves and attests the divine”.729 Moreover, recalling the communicatio gratiarum, humanity’s activity is correspondent to the initiatory movement of the divine, and as such its attestation: “It is where the divine rules and reveals and gives that the human serves and attests and mediates”.730

In sum, “[t]he one will of Jesus Christ is the eternal will of God and it is also – absolutely conformable for all its dissimilarity – the motivated human will which

725 CD 4/2, 115.
726 CD 4/2, 116-17.
727 CD 4/2, 115.
728 CD 4/2, 116.
729 CD 4/2, 115.
730 CD 4/2, 116.
determines the way of this human life as such”. That is precisely the unconfused and undivided double agency whereby Jesus Christ enacts his unique identity in the common actualization of his humiliated deity and exalted humanity – in strictest relationship and in perfect union.

Gethsemane

Barth’s most extended treatment of Gethsemane occurs in the middle of a section of CD 4/1, “The Judge Judged in Our Place”. More specifically, it functions as the effective conclusion to his description of the peculiarly human obedience of the incarnate Son – “his human work”, his life-act as “the just and righteous man ... the one man obedient to God”

That righteousness is his unqualified affirmation of God’s just judgment of sinful humanity – in his own person. In Adam’s fall, humanity’s sin is to wrest judgment away from God, taking it over as our prerogative. The countervailing holiness of Jesus is his willingness to represent us as sinners, consistently to refuse the temptation to self-justification – to “impenitent being and thinking and speaking and acting” –

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731 CD 4/2, 116.

732 For a fine recent study of Barth on Gethsemane, see Jones, Humanity of Christ, 229-242; also, Paul Dafydd Jones, “Karl Barth on Gethsemane” (International Journal of Systematic Theology 9, no. 2 [2007]) 148–71.

733 CD 4/1, 257. My discussion of Barth on Gethsemane is primarily an exposition of that passage (ibid., 259-73) with occasional reference to other places where Gethsemane is mentioned in 4/1, 4/2, and 4/3.

734 CD 4/1, 258.
uncompromisingly to surrender himself to the judgment of God – “put[ting] God in the right against Him” as the “one great sinner”.735

The righteousness of Jesus was then (as we saw earlier) not a static condition but a way of life, the day-by-day refusal of temptation and decision for penitence, from Jordan to Golgotha. That Jesus could be and was tempted, that he fought against temptation, that in decision after decision he “broke the common rule of all [our] decisions” – was penitent where we are impenitent, obedient where we are rebellious – is the witness of the New Testament (the Letter to the Hebrews in particular), and is epitomised in “the conflict of Jesus in Gethsemane”.736

That conflict must be understood against the background of the temptations in the wilderness at the beginning of his public ministry. There for the first time we see that, like us, Jesus is able to be tempted. We also see that, unlike us, he willingly exposes himself to temptation – “on the offensive and not on the defensive”.737 Refusing to turn stones into bread, Jesus persisted in his penitent fast and therefore in his representative solidarity with sinful humanity under condemnation, “in his own person ... bring[ing] to an issue the conflict” between God and his rebel covenant partner.738 Resisting Satan’s counterfeit offer of glory and power, Jesus continued to decide for the way of the cross, the way whose outcome must be certain failure, but the way he must go in obedience to God as the one great representative and penitent sinner. Rejecting Satan’s invitation to make his own titanic contribution of self-justifying faith, to risk all in a heroic test of God’s favour, in the guise of “robust faith”

735 CD 4/1, 258, 259.

736 CD 4/1, 260; cf., 4/2, 94-5.

737 CD 4/1, 261; “unlike us” in that “all other men can and ought and must refrain from seeking out temptation” (ibid., 260).

738 CD 4/1, 262.
to demand of God vindication, Jesus maintains his solidarity with a rebel race “allowing God to be in the right against Him”.739

At the end of his unsuccessful assault, Satan departs “‘until the decisive moment’ (achri kairou) [Luke 4.13]”.740 That moment is his passion, the events of Good Friday, but “especially ... the story of Gethsemane” in which “there is already compressed the whole happening of Good Friday”741 – at least, the whole happening in preparatio. Good Friday remains “the real passion”, the unique and unsurpassable event in which God once and for all reconciles the world to himself.742 Nonetheless, inseparable from it, the passion of Gethsemane establishes Jesus’ “definitive willingness” for what is to come.743 As such, it is the turning-point between the two parts of the Gospel history and the sure confirmation that the wilderness victory (at the commencement of the first part) has its inevitable end in the death of the victor (at the conclusion of the second part).744 In the garden, the victor agonizingly and triumphantly assents to the call, the command, that has determined his activity and constituted his identity all along the way.

It is Jesus himself who pauses, trembles, stumbles (albeit, “only for a – repeated – moment”) before the sheer immensity of the task and, “unexpectedly and disruptively

739 CD 4/1, 263, italics added.

740 CD 4/1, 264.

741 CD 4/1, 264.

742 CD 4/1, 264.

743 CD 4/1, 264.

744 CD 4/1, 264.
in light of all that has gone before”, asks for “another possibility”: this one who, with face set towards Jerusalem, has single-mindedly forged his way, undeterred by every obstacle, to “grasp ... this cup of the divine wrath”. Now, sorrowful and oppressed even unto death, he hesitates. Gone is the decisive immediacy of his precise resistance of Satan in the wilderness. How shall we account for this “terrified and shaken halt”, this horrified plea in face of the final reckoning – “... whether it really has to be”?

A preliminary answer lies in the ever more exact coincidence of the assault of the tempter and the hostility of the world. In obedience to the Father, Jesus has “placed himself and willed to be and to remain” in unshakeable solidarity with the world even in its rebellion and disobedience. But now, the full extent of its utter subjection to the evil one, hitherto occasionally evident in individual instances (as in Peter’s rebuke), manifests itself with terrible clarity as the overwhelming retribution of the world which will be unleashed upon him “because he has undertaken and dared to be unique amongst them, to resist temptation [the temptation to renounce his representative penitence], to achieve righteousness in their place”. The “necessarily bitter end” of his course of solidarity with the rebel world is the triumph of the tempter in exercise of the power that he acquires “under the pseudonym of human will and action”, the deceit, desertion, betrayal, abuse, and violence of friend and foe alike, to which Jesus will and must fall victim.

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745 CD 4/1, 264-5; cf., 4/2, 250.

746 CD 4/1, 265.

747 CD 4/1, 265.

748 CD 4/1, 266.

749 CD 4/1, 266.

750 CD 4/1, 266.
But this preliminary answer does not disclose the “real meaning” of Gethsemane and Jesus’ anguished hesitation.\textsuperscript{751} For that we must look first to the “frightful loneliness” of Jesus, epitomised in the sleep of the three disciples.\textsuperscript{752} “It is not self-evident that Jesus should be alone in this matter”.\textsuperscript{753} He looks for their companionship in his suffering, taking up his position about a stone’s throw away, but “in their presence and with their participation”, having told them of his overwhelming sorrow and asked them to watch and pray with him, they whom he has expressly called to be his apostles and “the foundation of his community in the world”.\textsuperscript{754} Only prayer will uphold him and them in face of the ordeal that “in all its malice” is about to break upon them, bringing with it the ultimate temptation to choose an easier way.\textsuperscript{755}

“For his sake and for their own they ought not to have left him alone when He went forward to pray”.\textsuperscript{756} But they did, not sharing but contributing to the world’s burden that he must bear. “Not with them but without them and therefore for them” Jesus undertakes his “decisive action”, which by virtue of “their notorious non-participation” has “absolutely nothing to correspond to it in the existence of those who believe in Him”.\textsuperscript{757}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[751] CD 4/1, 266.
\item[752] CD 4/1, 268.
\item[753] CD 4/1, 267.
\item[754] CD 4/1, 267.
\item[755] CD 4/1, 267.
\item[756] CD 4/1, 267.
\item[757] CD 4/1, 268; cf., 4/2, 185.
\end{footnotes}
Jesus’ agony is further increased by the terrible silence with which his prayer is met. The consolation of the angel mentioned by Luke (22.43) precedes the account of the *agōnia* and bloody sweat (22.44). The only answer is the very ordeal the awful prospect of which has so shatteringly overwhelmed and oppressed him. If Satan’s assault and the malice of the world are exactly coincident, now both are exactly coincident with the word and will of God. The face of God and the face of the enemy are indistinguishable. “The coincidence of the divine and the satanic will and work and word was ... the darkness in which Jesus addressed God in Gethsemane”.

In praying to be spared the cup, Jesus prays that this awful coincidence might not be permitted finally to overwhelm him, that, for the sake of the manifestation of the glory of God, the world might be saved from becoming the means of the triumph of Satan. It is after all for the glory and cause of God and the liberation of the world from its satanic bondage that Jesus has pursued his course, refusing every temptation not to continue the world’s representative penitent. “Surely ... God cannot will and allow” that he should be finally defeated by the diabolically choreographed rage of a rebel world.

That is Jesus’ prayer. And it is prayer: a conditional plea clearly expressing his wish that his end might be otherwise – but not more than that. He does not “set his will” in this direction; he does not, even temporarily, renounce the call and command of God that has been his meat day and night until this moment. The whole is borne up by the initial *if it is possible* (Matt 26.39), *if you are willing* (Luke 22.42). His plea is for another way that “might be God’s own will”.

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758 *CD 4/1* 268.

759 *CD 4/1*, 268, cf., 269, 271, 272.

760 *CD 4/1*, 269.

761 *CD 4/1*, 269.

762 *CD 4/1*, 269.
is provoked by the fearful prospect of the eclipse (“concealment”) of the lordship of the good and just God under the lordship of the false prince of this world, the countermand of “his just and saving judgment”, the condemnation of the judge.\(^\text{763}\)

The conditional appeal leads into the affirmation of the will of God and of the only possibility there is because it is according to God’s disposal. There is no change of mind on Jesus’ part. It is not that, even for a moment, he refused God’s will and his own status as a penitent (by virtue perhaps of the frailty of his humanity) only subsequently (in the power of his deity) to turn back and once more take up his original commission as the obedient one.\(^\text{764}\) Rather, uninterruptedly obedient, Jesus has besought the Father for an alternative way – which would be his will if and only if it were the Father’s. There being no such alternative, he is the more ready for the way that he must go: “He proceeds all the more determinedly along the way which He never left”.\(^\text{765}\)

There is in this deepening of Jesus’ unbroken assent to the way of the cross a note of triumph, a “radiant Yes to the actual will of God” that has nothing of resignation

\(^{763}\) \textit{CD 4/1, 269} (translation revised, \textit{KD 4/1, 296}, “saving”, not “redemptive”; Barth attributes salvation and deliverance [and reconciliation] to Jesus Christ, and attributes redemption to the Holy Spirit).

\(^{764}\) “The story of Gethsemane … shows two things: first, that we have to do with His genuine human decision; and second that it is a decision of obedience” (\textit{CD 4/1, 166}).

If it is not a conflict between his deity and humanity, neither is it, as Jesus’ words to his disciples – “the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak” (Matt 26.41) – might suggest, a matter of his soul in the second part of the prayer resisting the temporary manifestation of the frailty of the flesh expressed in the opening plea. “The New Testament contains not the slightest hint of an emancipation of the bodily life of Jesus from the soul nor of an ascetic conflict of the soul of Jesus against the body. The Spirit resting upon Him clearly makes the one impossible and the other superfluous…. On the contrary we are confronted by the picture of peace between these two moments of human existence” (\textit{CD 3/2, 338}).

\(^{765}\) \textit{CD 4/1, 270}. 
about it but is altogether “a great and irresistible advance”\textsuperscript{766} Albeit, it is an advance into the fiery ordeal of “His own rejection and condemnation ... according to the plan of God Himself”\textsuperscript{767} In the garden he tasted the bitterness of the cup. “He had not been needlessly afraid. There was every reason to ask that it might pass from Him”.\textsuperscript{768} The radiancy of his assent reflects his acceptance of the Father’s will, and more his willingness himself to pronounce God’s No and to pronounce it upon himself as the one great sinner.\textsuperscript{769}

In all of this, but especially in this last pronouncement, Jesus is set apart from the rest of humanity, “singled out by God”.\textsuperscript{770} His prayer in the garden “no other ever could pray or ever has prayed before or since”.\textsuperscript{771} “In the series of many sinners” only he, who alone refused the temptation to self-deception and self-justification, the temptation not to repent, could really be touched, oppressed, and terrified by the sin of the world in his own person as representative sin-bearer under God’s just judgment.\textsuperscript{772}

In his anguished, determined, and free assent to the will of the Father – that he should hear his prayer and not save him from this hour – the power of Satan was broken even as permission was granted him to do Jesus every possible injury and

\textsuperscript{766} CD 4/1, 270-1; cf., 4/2, 251-2; also, in a striking comparison with Job, 4/3, 388, 408.

\textsuperscript{767} CD 4/1, 271.

\textsuperscript{768} CD 4/1, 271.

\textsuperscript{769} “Jesus maintains the right by electing to let Himself be put in the wrong” (CD 4/1, 238).

\textsuperscript{770} CD 4/1, 271.

\textsuperscript{771} CD 4/1, 271.

\textsuperscript{772} CD 4/1, 271-2.
successfully overwhelm him. Jesus’ Yes to God’s No means that Satan himself is “impressed into the service of the will of God ... that his act of violence on this one man can achieve only what God has determined to his own glory and the salvation of all”.

Finally, this prayer completes the act of righteousness, the penitence and the obedience that had their beginning at the Jordan and in his uncompromising refusal of the tempter’s first assault in the wilderness. From beginning to end he is the exalted Son of God humiliated and the humiliated Son of Man exalted, the judge willingly judged in our place to the vindication of all.

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773 CD 4/1, 272.

774 CD 4/1, 272.

775 CD 4/1, 272.
The Glory of Israel

A Reading of Gethsemane

It is in fact more important for us to know what God did to Israel, to his Son Jesus Christ, than to know what God intends for us today.... What we call our life, our troubles, our guilt, is by no means all of reality; there in the Scriptures is our life, our need, our guilt, and our salvation. Because it pleased God to act for us there, it is only there that we shall be saved. Only in the Holy Scriptures do we learn to know our own history. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the God and Father of Jesus Christ and our Father.

Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

God’s kindness is the kindness of the God of Israel.

Barth, *Shorter Romans*

Taking Stock

I undertook this thesis with a view to establishing two things: the capacity of classical christologies in contemporary guise to offer a sufficient account of the humanity of Christ, and the indispensability of the Jewishness of Jesus to any reading of the Gethsemane texts.
With respect to the first, and in light of what has been learnt from Meyendorff, Balthasar, and Barth, three matters in particular must be taken into account. In describing them, the subtlety and sophistication, the nuance and detail, as well as those features which distinguish Meyendorff, Balthasar, and Barth from each other, are left behind with a view to the barest outline of the essential argument.

A sufficient description of Christ’s humanity is impossible apart from a complementary description of his deity. It belongs to the nature, the character of God that he can and does comprehend the fullness of humanity in the event of the incarnation. It is who God is as God that enables him to become unadulteratedly human, and as such an individual man, the man Christ Jesus.

Accordingly, we must go on to say that in Jesus Christ God and humanity, divine and human natures, far from being mutually exclusive – each threatening the authenticity of the other if brought into too close proximity – are essentially non-competitive, indeed complementary. God does not have to overcome, restrict, or otherwise compromise his deity in becoming human. And as a man, the man Jesus is self-consistently and transparently, identically, God the Son of God incarnate.776

Finally, and implicit in the foregoing, whatever the kenosis of God entailed by the incarnation, it consists in no abbreviation of his deity, no setting aside or leaving behind or otherwise concealing of his divine glory, but the very opposite, the humanly enacted self-revelation of the mystery of what it is for God to be God. The exinanitio of the incarnate Son, his humiliation and humanly enacted obedience even unto death, is itself the glory of God and humanity’s glory, the glory of the only-begotten beheld precisely in the Word made flesh and dwelling among us.

Jesus is authentically human then not in spite, but because of his being God. His altogether and uncompromisingly human existence, the whole course of his life and activity as a man is his own deed, the deed of God, the Son of God. The one and self-

776 The ontological transparency of the identification becomes epistemologically available to the eyes of faith only with Christ’s resurrection; albeit, there are moments of recognition before that, most notably at Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8.29, and parallels).
same person, Jesus of Nazareth, enacts the one will and purpose of God, which is his as it is the Father’s and the Spirit’s, in the totality of human intentions, decisions, and actions that constitute his unsubstututably777 human life from womb to tomb and beyond.

The second purpose of this thesis concerns Jesus’ agony in the garden. It became a matter of dispute in the original sixth century dionthelite controversy. In applying the Chalcedonian Definition, and especially the four adverbs, to the purpose, agency, and activity of Jesus, the apparent disjunction and even opposition between his own will and that of the Father (“not my will but thine be done”) seemed to threaten the so carefully defined unity of the two natures in his one person.

In terms of our contemporary articulation of the classical understanding, the transparent identification of divine deed and human activity, hitherto unbroken through the whole course of Jesus’ life, here in the garden appears, if only temporarily, to have come apart: “Father, take this cup from me ...”. It is as if Jesus is authentically human here not by virtue of, but in opposition to, the being and purpose of God. What Jesus wills, that he be relieved of this cup, and the purpose of the Father, that he should drink it, appear to be in competition with each other and mutually exclusive. The immediate prospect of his humiliation and death ostensibly constrains Jesus to refuse “this cup”, to turn aside from the way of the cross, as the ignominious defeat and not the glorious fulfillment of God’s saving purpose for the world.

Such is the singular challenge that Gethsemane represented and continues to represent to those who would argue for the consistently non-competitive transparency one to the other of the double (divine and human) agency of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word.

The challenge may be met by denying the continuing discrete integrity of the two natures and agencies after the union. Kenotic theories that set Christ’s deity in

abeyance during part or all of his earthly life, account for Gethsemane in terms of a recognisably human response to a difficult task, in Jesus’ case a response that includes hesitancy, fear, and anguish on the way to a renewed willingness to get the job done, the dormancy of his deity making unnecessary any reconciliation of this human frailty with his deity. In the opposite direction, those for whom the human nature is subsumed under the divine as its passive instrument or tool interpret Gethsemane as either didactic performance or a moment of merely human frailty permitted, contemplated as it were at one remove, and immediately discounted in the reassertion of the properly directive control of his deity.\textsuperscript{778}

Refusing to subsume either of the natures to the other, we have seen Meyendorff’s, Balthasar’s, and Barth’s determination to maintain the discrete integrity and agency of the natures after the union and without compromise to the union. And, to repeat, we have seen that they are able to do this primarily because of their doctrine of God. The altogether human experience of anguished prayer in Gethsemane is not inconsistent with the divine activity of the Son. It belongs to his eternal glory that he is willingly the Father’s Word and Deed. His prayerful obedience, epitomised in Gethsemane but characterizing his whole career from womb to tomb, is that eternal glory in a properly human mode.

Even the plea to be relieved of the cup? Yes, even that. Though the three authors account for it differently. For Meyendorff, Christ’s hesitancy is occasioned by his profoundly human if temporary resistance to death as the scandalous contradiction of God’s original purpose of life for all that he has made. For Balthasar, it represents his double and paradoxical solidarity with sinful humanity (bearing in himself the world’s No) and the holy God (affirming the Father’s will), the resolution of which, on the eve of his passion, is beyond his capacity to comprehend. And for Barth, Jesus stumbles before the awful, threefold, and indistinguishable coincidence of Satan’s  

\textsuperscript{778} That Jesus’ initial request (that the cup should pass from him) was not attributable to his \textit{ousia} as the incarnate Word, but represented a momentary impulse or weakness of the flesh, was according to Maximus (in \textit{Opuscula} 15) the view of Athanasius of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, and Severus of Gabala.
assault, the malice of the world, and the purpose of God, which threatens finally to overwhelm him whose mission is to reconcile the world, vanquishing Satan to the glory of God.

A Modest Proposal

Without wishing to gainsay the foregoing, indeed informed by them at every step of the way, I propose to offer a further interpretation of Gethsemane more strictly defined in terms of Yahweh’s covenant with Israel. I do so taking my cue from my three authors. Meyendorff cautions against what he calls platonizing abstractions of human nature in favour of an account of Jesus’ humanity that is concrete, historical, and individual.779 Balthasar is impressed by Maximus’ immense contribution to the eventual defeat of monothelitism at the Sixth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (681). Nonetheless, he is convinced that a sufficiently concrete delineation of Jesus’ distinctively human agency is a task that remains with the church to this day as unfinished business.780 In a similar vein, Barth insists that Jesus is neither a neutral nor an idealised human being. The *vere homo* and *vere deus* do not define Jesus. Rather, he defines them in his temporal history from Bethlehem to Golgotha.781 Above all, as the one thing apart from which everything else lacks its proper “contour and colour, definiteness and necessity”,782 the Word became a Jew, this particular Jew, this son of Abraham, David,

\[779\] Byzantine Theology, 47, 159.

\[780\] TD 3, 215-16.

\[781\] CD 4/1, 129, cf., 136.

\[782\] CD 4/1, 166. I am not aware of any text of either Meyendorff or Balthasar in which there is a similar insistence upon the priority and indispensability of Jesus’ Jewishness to a sufficiently concrete christology.
and Mary. Somewhat surprisingly, this plays almost no part in Barth’s readings of Gethsemane. What might a reading of that text look like that pressed the concreteness of Christ’s humanity in terms of his being a son of Israel, and what christological/soteriological implications might follow from it?

“He came out, and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives” (Lk 22.39)

Where has he come out from? Most immediately, he has come from the upper room and celebration of Passover with the Twelve, where his conduct and conversation give no indication of the agony he so soon after displays in the garden. In a prophetic act anticipating his immanent suffering, he newly identifies the unleavened bread and one of the Passover cups with himself and the new covenant he is about to establish by his self-offering. Judas leaves them, though not before Jesus has subtly identified, and in John’s account (13.26ff) urgently commissioned him as betrayer. Talk of betrayal provokes a competitive dispute among the disciples which Jesus settles by drawing a radical distinction between greatness as understood and exercised by the Gentiles and the greatness in service that characterises those who follow him, who “am among you as one who serves” (Lk 22.27).

Startlingly juxtaposed to the disciples’ discreditable and vainglorious dispute is Jesus’ extraordinary commendation and promissory commissioning of them. Their evident fallibility altogether ignored, he identifies them as “those who have stood by me in my trials” (Lk 22.28), and personally confers on them (“just as my Father has conferred on me”) royal status (“I confer on you ... a kingdom”), privilege (“so that you

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783 CD 4/1, 166-7, 170; 4/2, 6.

784 I shall take my bearings from Luke (22.39-46), as it was Maximus’ preferred account in the seventh century monothelite controversy. I shall read it with Matthew (26.36-46) and Mark (14.32-42) open beside it, and also with reference to Johannean parallels (especially, 12.20-33).
may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom”), and responsibility (“you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel”) (Lk 22.29f).

In all of this, we must not ignore Jesus’ contrasting descriptions of Jews and Gentiles. The Gentiles stand over against, as the contradictory image of, the citizens of God’s kingdom. The twelve tribes of Israel are the proper responsibility of Jesus and his vice-gerent disciples. His occasional encounters with Gentiles notwithstanding, from beginning to end of his temporal history Israel is Jesus’ primary, even exclusive, focus (a matter to which I shall return).

Returning to the upper room, Jesus’ exalted commendation and commissioning of his disciples stands in as startling juxtaposition with what follows as what precedes. They have stood with him in his trials and are destined for royal privilege and responsibility, yet will assuredly desert him in his moment of greatest need. As Satan entered Judas upon his receiving the wine-soaked morsel at Jesus’ hand, so it is Satan who will choreograph their desertion and denials, “sift[ing] them as wheat” (Lk 22.31), a detail not to be forgotten when in the garden Jesus exhorts his disciples to pray against falling into temptation. But, in the same breath as this dreadful promise of their failure, Jesus assures Peter of his intercession on his and the others’ behalf: he has asked the Father not that they may not fail but that in and through their failure Peter’s faith may not fail, so that upon their return he, Peter, may be equipped to strengthen them.

785 Cf., Lk 12.22, 32: “Jesus said to his disciples, ‘... Fear not, little flock, for it is your father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom’”.

786 We may be reminded of St Paul’s description of the Gentiles as “without Christ, ... aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2.12).

787 Again, we may compare St Paul: “to them [the Jews] belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, the promises, ... the patriarchs, and from them according to the flesh comes the Messiah ...”; and again, “as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom 9.4f; 11.28f).
How so? From what or whom will Peter derive his ability to provide encouragement? Precisely from his abject failure, rendered the more humiliating by the memory of his bold, brash contradiction of Jesus’ prediction of his failure. He will be undeceived regarding his mortal and moral frailty. His hope for himself and the others will no longer rest in himself or them, but solely in the object of his faith, in the one who by his intercession sustains that faith, in the one who refuses to turn his back on them even as he knows that they will turn their backs on him.

This double juxtaposition, this bracketing of Jesus’ exalted commendation and commissioning, by two episodes in which is exposed the disciples’ complete incapacity in themselves to merit his praise and promise, is indicative of the fact that it is Jesus himself who will in what is to come establish the only but secure ground and justification for his confidence on their behalf. However terrible his impending ordeal and however profound his anguish, in these verses on the very eve of his passion he speaks and acts with lordly abandon, inaugurating a new covenant, conferring a new kingdom, and promising the redemptive return of his scattered disciples.

Nor does he do so by underestimating what he is about to suffer. His last words before leaving the upper room for Gethsemane are an exhortation to his disciples no longer to count on his provision for them as they have been able to do until now, but urgently to equip themselves for the coming ordeal with bag, sandals, cloak, and above all swords. Most notable is the reason he provides, namely, that what is written about him in the scriptures is being fulfilled: specifically though not exclusively, a phrase from one of the servant-songs of Isaiah, “and he was counted among the lawless” (Lk 22.37, quoting Isaiah 53.12). The same uncompromising clarity with respect to his immanent ordeal has been in evidence throughout his public ministry; as also, his repeated references to the scriptures as anticipatory even determinative of his prophetic perception and destiny.

788 In the first part of the verse it is “this scripture that must be fulfilled in me”; in the second part, just possibly still only referring to this scripture, but more likely, with a more general reference, it is “indeed what is written about me [that] is being fulfilled” (Lk 22.37).
It is then as a son of Israel, fresh from his deliberately prophetic celebration of Passover, in the company of his disciples whom he has newly appointed judges of Israel, and informed by Israel’s scriptures and therefore filled with foreboding not unmixed with hope, that Jesus makes his way from the upper room to the Mount of Olives. It has been his customary retreat at the end of each day of this his latest visit to Jerusalem, a visit that began with recognizably messianic actions (Lk 19.28-46): his triumphal descent of this same Mount of Olives on a donkey (in direct fulfilment of Zechariah’s word [9.9]) to the glad shouts of the multitudes, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”; his prophetic lament over Jerusalem’s refusal to acknowledge in him her peace, which refusal seals her immanent doom; and his sudden visitation and cleansing of the temple that “my house” may be no longer “a den of thieves” but “a house of prayer”. Each day thereafter he has taught in the temple, vigorously challenged as to his authority for his words and deeds; himself, among other things, repeatedly warning of imminent judgment and destruction; and each evening “go[ing] out and spend[ing] the night on the Mount of Olives” (Lk 21.37). But this night is different.

“When he reached the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you may not come into the time of trial’” (Lk 22.40)

The days of his coming and going at will are ended; the day of his last and greatest trial is upon him. And his trial will be the occasion of his disciples’ trial, that sifting by Satan

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789 The acclamation (Ps 118.26) is the usual greeting for Passover pilgrims, but with the addition of the word king it takes on messianic significance in the context.

790 Jesus’ lament is full of allusions to oracles of judgment (2Kings 8.11-12; Ps 137.9; Is 29.3-10; 48.18; Jer 6.6-20; 8.18-21; 15.5; 23.38-40); this is his second lament over Jerusalem (cf., Lk 13.34).

791 The episode recalls Malachi’s promise, 3.1-3; the quotation conflates several texts, including Is 56.7 and Jer 7.11.
of which he had spoken earlier in the evening. His first thought is for them as he exhorts them to prepare themselves, as he will himself, in the only way open to them – prayer to the Father that he would keep and protect them from the ordeal. From it, not in or through it, for he knows and has already told them clearly that it will be beyond them to endure: “You will all become deserters; for it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered” (Mk 14.26). Jesus’ exhortation (“pray that you may not come into the time of trial” [Lk 22.40]) recalls almost word for word a clause in the prayer that he had earlier taught them, as it also anticipates the first part of his own prayer to be relieved of the cup, which he will shortly utter.

Jesus will not willingly go to his death alone. The disciples will leave him alone but not because he sends them from him, at least until (in John’s account) he is about to be arrested and out of protective concern urges the soldiers to “let these men go” (18.8). None of the Gospels depicts Jesus as a solitary hero concerned to demonstrate his preeminence. On the contrary, they emphasise his binding his disciples to himself, cherishing and counting on their companionship.792 Why is this so? Because, in the beginning he chose and appointed them to be “with him” (Mk 3.14), to be his ambassadors throughout Israel though not to the Gentiles or the Samaritans (Mt 10.5), and, as we have seen in the upper room, to be his vice-gerents over all Israel. He would have them with him because they are his, and according to John, his by the Father’s gift (Jn 17.12; 18.9; cf., 6.39). He enters upon his ordeal with and for them.

But more, as his ambassadors and as those who will judge the twelve tribes of Israel, they represent and stand in for Israel as the elect and covenant partner of God. Cherishing their companionship, he signifies and demonstrates his covenant solidarity with Israel as their Messiah. Over and over again in his public ministry he has lamented, once with tears, Israel’s refusal to acknowledge and more to embrace and to be embraced by that solidarity in covenant partnership: “How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were

792 We need but recall his first words to them at Passover earlier in the evening: “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” (Lk 22.15).
not willing!” (Lk 13.34). Like the prophets of old he has repeatedly warned them against rejecting him: in him they have to do with their covenant God’s decisive visitation (cf., Lk 19.44); if they persist in their rejection he who is their glory and their cornerstone will turn to their shame and become a stumbling-block (cf., Lk 20.17f).

The urgency of his warnings and the intensity of his lamentations are indicative of the strength of his covenant solidarity with his people, holding out the promise that though they persist in their unfaithfulness, yet he will remain faithful. Though they give him up and “hand him over to the Gentiles” (Lk 18.32), he will not give up on them nor let them go.

_He cherishes the companionship of his disciples then on account of his solidarity with them, and in them with all Israel as the elect and covenant partner of the one who has sent him to them and entrusted them to him._ But perhaps also, there is something here of the spirit of Elijah. His infamous flight of despair into the wilderness seems to have been provoked not only by the violent hostility of the royal family, but also by his sense of utter isolation: “... the Israelites have forsaken your covenant ... and I alone am left ...” (1 Kgs 19.10). Is Jesus, in his growing isolation, taking warning from Elijah’s example, and holding on to the physical presence of his disciples for as long as possible? And is not his exhortation to watch and pray aimed in part at least at prolonging their companionship with him?

_“Then he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed” (Lk 22.41)_

His solidarity with his own including his cherishing of their physical companionship powerfully demonstrated, it nonetheless behoves him to separate himself from them, though no further than is absolutely necessary. He has made it clear that his

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793 The image recalls the sheltering wings of the Lord of the covenant and their representation in the Temple (see, for example, Dt 32.10f; Pss 17.8; 36.7; 57.1; 63.7; Is 31.5).

794 Matthew and Mark have “a little farther”; the relatively greater precision of Luke’s “about a stone’s throw” sounds almost as if it might represent the vivid remembrance of an eyewitness.
disciples will not be able to endure but will fail him. Therefore, in this solemn preparation for what is to come and for the sake of the solidarity which from his side he will not break, he must encounter the Father on his own, though not out of sight or even hearing. Upon entering the garden he had commanded them to remain, “while I go over there and pray” (Mt 26.36; cf., Mk 14.32). He would not have them ignorant of his conduct.

In Luke he “knelt down”; in Matthew and Mark he “fell on the ground” (Mk 14.35), “… on his face” (Mt 26.39). The latter emphasise the anguish and urgency of his plea; the former his reverent submission. The descriptions are complementary and not mutually exclusive. Each also guards the other from misinterpretation: his kneeling speaks against pressing his anguish to the extreme of despair and hopelessness; his casting himself to the ground, against any suggestion of merely exemplarist role-play or even pseudo-divine detachment and indifference.

“It is tempting with biblical texts that have sprung to prominence in dogmatic controversy, to let slip context, genre, syntax, and the like in blinkered pursuit of words and phrases to use as weapons in debate. It is to Maximus’ credit that in his diothelite apologetic he avoided this trap, paying special attention in his readings of Gethsemane

and prayed, saying” (Lk 22.41)


to genre. In the writings of his chief opponent, Sergius, but also in much patristic material, Gethsemane had figured as evidence for theological affirmations, treated similarly to John 6.38, as a self-descriptive theological statement about the constitution of the incarnate Son of God. By contrast, for Maximus it was essential that it be read as the prayer it is. Prayer, moreover, that is addressed in its entirety to the Father, so that it may not be reduced to a deliberation on Jesus’ part between his human and divine wills. It is neither theological description nor reflective deliberation. It is prayer.

Attention to genre raises the profile of two related aspects of the text, namely, sequence and movement. Jesus’ prayer takes time and represents movement of will on his part. For Sergius, and for many before him, the difference between the two parts of the Gethsemane prayer was problematic, because as they believed difference necessarily entails opposition as opposition necessarily entails difference. One and the same person cannot be said to have willed, at once, two contradictory things, specifically, the refusal and the acceptance of the cup. Yet, in Gethsemane that appears to have happened. How was this to be explained? The refusal and the acceptance must, Sergius argued, be attributed to different wills. But then, the one person, Jesus Christ, is divided against himself. Sergius resolved the predicament by distinguishing between Christ’s assumption of human nature and his mere appropriation of a human will. This served to set Christ’s human will at one remove from his essential being as the Son of God. Not really his, he appropriated it only in order constantly to deny and reject it, willing and acting consistently according to the will that was properly his, the divine

797 Maximus discusses Gethsemane in several places. The most important are: Opusculas 3, 6, 7, 16, and 28 (this last better known as Disputation with Pyrrhus). See Appendix 2 for my translations of Opuscula 6 and selections from the Disputation.

798 “I am come down from heaven not to do my will but the will of the one who sent me”.

799 This text had earlier proved a stumbling block in the Arian controversy. Arius and his followers, in arguing against the homoousian to patri, cited it as evidence of difference of will corresponding to difference of ousia between Jesus and God the Father.
will. Thereby, Sergius was able to acknowledge Christ’s two wills but remain essentially monothelite.\textsuperscript{800}

In Maximus’ view, Sergius had constructed a false predicament and correspondingly suspect solution by ignoring not only the genre, prayer, but also its sequential movement. The whole prayer is one prayer, one prayer in two parts, addressed to the Father from beginning to end. The second part follows the first part in time. While it is true that Jesus yields his initial request for an alternative to his later consent to the cup, the initial request has its own relative and authentic status. Jesus really did recoil before the fearful prospect of the cross. He expressed that in a genuine request for an alternative to be found, a request humbly if not the less passionately and sincerely made of the Father. The whole represents an actual human movement of will with respect to the Father on Jesus’ part. Thus Maximus was able to account for difference in other than contradictory terms, unbinding Sergius’ mutually necessary entailment of difference and opposition, and doing away with his predicament. At the conclusion of the prayer Jesus has found or been granted a perfect accord with the Father, and therein the strength to move forward to the cross. The consent to the Father’s will manifests the unified movement of his will; the prayer, the progression of that movement. The order of the prayer is decisive. The acceptance of the passion follows the resistance, otherwise that resistance would be a refusal to enact our salvation. Equally, the resistance precedes the acceptance demonstrating that it is a human act of willing obedience, a prayed subjection to the Father. The Saviour willed “by his agony ... to save us from agony”.\textsuperscript{801}

\textsuperscript{800} François Marie Léthel observes that this makes Christ’s human will "comme le péché": the language of appropriation was used by Sergius, as also in the tradition generally, to describe Christ’s relation to sin (François Marie Léthel, "Introduction" de Maxime Le Confesseur: L’Agonie du Christ, ed. Marie-Hélène Congourdeau [Paris: Migne, 1996], 16).

\textsuperscript{801} Maximus the Confessor, Opuscula 16 (PG 91.196D-197A).
But, the profoundest questions remain still to be considered. What is the cup? Why does Jesus plead for it to be removed? What is the exact character of the shift from plea to consent? With these questions in mind, I turn to the prayer itself.

“Father” (Lk 22.42)

Barth has said that not only the *vere homo* but the *vere deus* must be defined in terms of the Gospel narratives. In that context then, to whom does Jesus address his prayer? His celebration of passover and reference to the fulfilling of the scriptures are but the latest in a continuous series of indications as to the identity of the Father. Without being exhaustive, we may take account of some of them. I shall continue to limit myself to Luke’s Gospel. If it is, as has often been suggested, the most gentile of the Gospels it is the more remarkable that in the birth narratives with which it begins, the God of the Gospel is evidently the God of Israel, the God who has enacted his identity in the unfolding history of his elect people as recounted in their scriptures, a history that is being brought to its climactic fulfilment in the events that are about to be rehearsed. Zechariah is told that his son’s mission will be to “turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God” (1.16). Mary is informed that the Lord God will give to her child “the throne of his ancestor David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever” (1.32f). But it is in the canticles that things are made unambiguously clear. Mary praises and rejoices in God because “he has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his seed forever” (1.46f, 54f). Similarly, it is the Lord God of Israel whom Zechariah blesses because he has looked favourably on his people and redeemed them, raising up “a mighty saviour for us in the house of his servant David”; and he has done so in fulfilment of what he had spoken “through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old”, the promise he made “to our ancestors” and “the holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our ancestor Abraham” (1.68-73).

With the birth of Jesus, much of what in these canticles is said of Israel’s God, is applied directly to the new-born infant. “... To you is born this day in the city of David a
Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord” (2.11). The old man Simeon has been kept from death until, as “revealed to him by the Holy Spirit”, he should see “the Lord’s Messiah”, “the consolation of Israel” (2.25f). In looking upon and holding in his arms this child, his eyes see the Lord’s salvation. The child is “the glory” of the Lord’s people, Israel, and “a light for revelation to the Gentiles” (2.25-32). Implicit in this last is a reference to the Lord’s original promise to Abraham, that his covenant with him “and his seed forever” would be a blessing not only to themselves, but also to “all the families of the earth” (Gn 12.3). But the distinction at the heart of that universal promise is maintained on Simeon’s lips: the gentiles are identified with a definite article, Israel with a possessive pronoun. The blessing in store for the nations is conditional upon and the fruit of, entailed by, the Lord’s peculiar dealings with the people whom he has set aside for himself and visited in the advent of Jesus.

It could not be clearer. The God of Luke’s Gospel and therefore the Father to whom Jesus prays in Gethsemane, is none other than the God of Israel, the Lord who in the coming of Jesus has acted for the salvation of his elect in fulfilment of his covenant oath sworn to Abraham and reiterated throughout the whole prophetic tradition.

But, what of the particular designation of Israel’s God as Father? It has been Jesus’ preferred designation from the beginning. His mother’s anxious and upbraiding appeal to her twelve-year old son in the Temple, an appeal that had included explicit reference to “your father”, was met in turn by his own somewhat abrupt questions of rebuke, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s interests?” (2.48f). His mission is his by his heavenly Father’s appointment. In the very next episode in Luke’s narrative, at Jesus’ baptism, it is this same Father’s turn to speak, confirming Jesus’ identity and mission: “You are my son, the beloved; with you I am well pleased” (3.22). Jesus’ possessive, covenantal pronoun, my Father, corresponds to the Father’s, my Son. It is Satan’s singular subtlety that in the wilderness temptations that follow the baptism he directs his attack at this nerve-centre of Jesus’ identity with his repeated “If you are the Son of God ...” (Lk 4.3, 9).

The next time that the designation makes its appearance is in the context of Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi. The beloved of the Father is Israel’s long-promised Messiah. Peter’s greater precision in recognition is attributed by Jesus not to
human insight but to revelation “by my Father” (Mt 16.17). Moments later in the
narrative, Jesus warns those who would evade the cost and shame of discipleship: “of
them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the
[his (Mt/Mk)] Father” (Lk 9.26; cf., Mt. 16.27; Mk 8.38).

Already in these texts Jesus, as the beloved of the Father and in the context of
direct references to his Father, is identified as possessed of a dual vocation to suffering
messiahsheid and glorious judgment.

But there is more. The synoptic narrative moves immediately from Jesus’
warning to the transfiguration, with its climactic declaration by the Father (in direct
confirmation of Peter’s messianic confession, as also of Jesus’ recognition and rebuke of
the tempter’s seductive appeal through the same Peter), “This is my Son, my Chosen
[other ancient authorities read, my Beloved], listen to him!” (Lk 9.35). It is an apt
summary of all that we have seen so far. Whenever the God of Israel is designated
Father in the synoptic narratives, something more of Jesus’ personal identity and
mission is revealed: he is the beloved of the Father, his elect and covenant partner,
ordained messiahs by baptismal donation of the Spirit, and judge of his elect and
covenant people Israel.

The same themes recur in a passage that might easily be mistaken for a Johanine
transplant, common to Matthew (11.25-28) and Luke (10.21f), but absent from Mark.
No other passage outside of John’s Gospel explicates the relationship between the
Father and the Son so directly. Their identities and relationship are a closed mystery:
“no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son”.
Their relationship is ordered, all things having been “handed over to the Son by the
Father”. The “all things ... handed over” includes responsibility for the revelation of the
mystery: it is his to “choose” to whom to reveal his Father, whom he has identified as
“the one who sent me” (Lk 10.16; cf., 9.48; Mt 10.41; Mk 9.37). Yet, neither Father nor
Son acts apart from the other. Immediately before this exposition of their relationship,
Jesus, “rejoic[ing] in the Holy Spirit” has offered thanksgiving to the Father for his
initiative and decision in self-revelation: according to his “gracious will” withholding it
from the “wise and intelligent” and granting it “to infants” (Lk 10.21; Mt 11.25). That
Father and Son are undertaking to reveal the mystery that is their mutual relationship,
including especially the sovereign authority delegated to the Son by the Father, finds its complement in the lightning fall of Satan the imposter, pretender, and counterfeit ruler of this world. In Luke’s narrative, Jesus’ vision of his fall immediately precedes his explication of the mystery we have been examining, as also his assurance to his disciples (freshly returned from the victorious mission on which he had sent them) that their names are written in heaven (Lk 10.17ff). The note of lasting triumph resounds throughout this passage, triumph that originates with and is brought to fulfilment in the covenant mutuality of identity and relationship of the Father and his Son, Israel’s messianic king and judge. The revelation of that mystery in him is a blessing to its recipients, for it is nothing less than the long-awaited fulfilment of Israel’s constitutive and most cherished hope, a fulfilment which “prophets and kings longed to see ... [and] hear” (Lk 10.23f; Mt 13.16f).802

All of this lies behind, indeed constitutes the content of, that one word, “Father”, with which Jesus begins his prayer in Gethsemane. And there is more. That more is in regard to the identification of Jesus’ Father with Israel’s covenant God. The so-called parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15.11-32) is addressed, as Luke is careful to make clear, to Israel, and more particularly on the one hand to “all the tax collectors and sinners” who “were coming near to listen to Jesus” (represented in the parable by the younger son), and on the other hand to “the Pharisees and the scribes” (represented by the elder son) who were offended by his welcoming and keeping company, table fellowship, with sinners (Lk 15.1f). And yet, neither of the sons but rather their father is the central figure in the parable. It is his inexhaustible mercy and generosity towards both sons that are underlined by Jesus, who in telling the story as commentary on his own conduct at once announces and bestows on Israel, prodigal and self-righteous alike, the Father’s covenant love.

In his final week in Jerusalem, almost on the eve of his passion, Jesus tells one of his vineyard parables (Lk 20.9-19), deploying a favourite prophetic image for Israel as

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802 The coincidence of revelation, victory, and blessing is especially evident in Luke’s narrative where Jesus’ beatitude follows immediately upon his exposition of the mystery. Matthew emphasises the inclusive reach of Jesus’ choice in appending his generous invitation, “Come unto me all ...” (Mt 11.28).
God’s elect. The planter and owner of the vineyard sends successive “slaves” to the tenants to whom he has leased it, to collect his share of the produce. Each is mistreated and sent away empty-handed, until as a last resort the owner sends “my beloved son”, in the hope that “perhaps they will respect him”. Seizing their opportunity to wrest ownership to themselves, the tenants expel and kill the son, having concluded that, with the heir disposed of, the inheritance will be theirs. In their folly they have not reckoned with whom they are dealing. Far from yielding the inheritance, Jesus assures his listeners and especially “the chief priests and scribes who realized that he had told the parable against them”, that the owner “will come and destroy those tenants and give his vineyard to others”. And implicit (“What then does this text mean?”) in the Isaiah text which Jesus appends, the very son and heir whom they killed will be their judge for, “the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’, so that everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls”.

The references back to Israel’s history and scriptures are clear. As also, that Jesus has not come to supplant or even to render them secondary, but to confirm and bring them to fulfilment. Evidence abounds. I shall take account of just two instances. In a passage that combines urgent exhortation and warning to the citizens of the towns and villages of Israel on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus’ doubt as to their destiny contrasts vividly with his unqualified assurance that “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets [are] in the kingdom of God” (Lk 13.28). Similarly, this time in Jerusalem just days before his arrest, in answer to the Sadducees’ absurdly mocking test-case about resurrection, Jesus finds implicit reference to resurrection life beyond the grave in the books of Moses (the only scriptures recognized by the Sadducees as authoritative) where “in the story about the bush Moses speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”, all of whom must be alive because “he is the God not of the dead, but of the living” (Lk 20.37f). My selective quotation and paraphrase does not do justice to the definiteness of Jesus’ own words: “to him all of them [Abraham, Isaac, Jacob] are alive” (Lk 20.38). Nor should we ignore the particular significance of Jesus’ biblical reference. For what he calls “the story of the

See, Ps 80.8-16; Is 5.1-7; 27.2-6; Jer 2.21; Ezek 19.10-14; Hos 10.1.
“bush” is the account of God’s self-revelation to Moses as “I am who I am”, and “YHWH [the Lord], the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations” (Ex 3.14f).

This is the God whom Jesus addresses as Father, whose business he is about, and to whom he addresses his prayer in Gethsemane. And as we have seen, Jesus prays to the Father as his beloved Son, elect, anointed and commissioned to be Israel’s persecuted messiah and victorious judge.

The one whom Jesus addresses as his Father is none other than Yahweh, the God of Israel. That being said, is Jesus’ practice a new thing, or is it recognizably consistent with the father/son relationship between Yahweh and Israel as depicted in Israel’s scriptures? I propose to work towards an answer to that question by surveying the most prominently relevant of those scriptures, demonstrating not only the continuity between Israel and Jesus as Yahweh’s son, but also the constitutive character of Israel’s filial relationship for understanding Jesus’ mission, and more specifically, his startling plea in Gethsemane.

In the chapter following that in which Yahweh reveals his names to Moses, commissioning him “to bring my people ... out of Egypt” (Ex 3.10), he explains to him that in face of the wonders he will perform before Pharaoh, he, the Lord, will repeatedly “harden Pharaoh’s heart, so that he will not let the people go” (Ex 4.21). Then Moses is commanded to say, “Thus says the Lord: Israel is my firstborn son. I said to you, ‘Let my son go that he may worship me’. But you refused ... now I will kill your firstborn son” (Ex 4.22f). As the Lord’s elect and covenant partner, Israel as a corporate entity is his firstborn son, whom it is his purpose to deliver from slavery that they may worship him and that he may bring them into the homeland that he will give them.

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804 Whether or not the salutation of God as Father was “astonishing for a Jew in Jesus’ time” and “a new and unexpected gift” to his followers (Eduard Schweizer, *A Theological Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. O. C. Dean, Jr. [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991], 19), I am not qualified to determine. What I propose to demonstrate is that, whether or not the practice was unfamiliar in Jesus’ time, it is theologically continuous with the father/son covenant relationship of Yahweh and Israel as it is portrayed in the Old Testament. More than that, we will misunderstand the relationship of Jesus to his heavenly Father (and derivatively that of his disciples) if we do not interpret it in terms of Yahweh’s covenant with Israel.
At the end of his life as depicted by the deuteronomist, Moses recites a valedictory canticle that may be read as an extended meditation on what he has learned of the relationship between Yahweh and his firstborn. As we shall see, all of the outstanding features of that relationship depicted in Moses’ song recur in other contexts where Yahweh’ paternal responsibility for his elect comes to the fore. Not surprisingly, these same features reappear on the lips of Jesus.  

Moses commences his song by stating that his purpose is to glorify the name of Israel’s Lord, whose perfect faithfulness and justice are in stark contrast to the waywardness of “his degenerate children” (Dt 32.3-5). He is their father, who created them, chose them out of all the nations to be his own, and shielded and sustained them “as the apple of his eye” (Dt 32.6-10). Thriving on the Lord’s extravagant generosity towards them, they abandoned and scoffed at him, their creator and saviour, preferring to “sacrifice to demons, not God, ... deities they had never known, new ones recently arrived”: they were “unmindful of the Rock that bore [them]” and “forgot the God who gave them birth” (Dt 32.11-18).

Provoked by their apostasy the Lord “hide[s] his face from them”, withdraws his favour and protective presence, and in apparent indifference waits to “see what their end will be” (Dt 32.19-21). But indifference it is not. Rather does it express his intense and aggressive hostility, the onslaught of his burning wrath, against their all-consuming perversity and unfaithfulness. In the language and imagery of covenantal curses earlier recited by Moses (Dt 28.15-44, esp., 21f), the Lord graphically contemplates the tortuous extinction of his people, his anger reaching cosmically catastrophic proportions, “burn[ing] to the depths of Sheol” and “devour[ing] the earth and its increase” (Dt 32.22-25).

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805 Because all of the elements of the father/son relationship of Yahweh and Israel are here in nucleus, I propose to follow the text with rigorous even pedantic deliberation. Leaving aside the results of historical-, source-, and literary-critical analysis, and refusing to jump directly to reductionist and summary paraphrase, I will restrict myself to the literal sense of the text as the deuteronomist has set it forth – a prophetic diatribe on the lips of Moses near the end of his career – on the conviction that the inspiration, the holiness, the revelatory character, the eccentric integrity, of the text is best served by attention to its plain sense. What follows is in other words an experiment in what I have briefly described in the Introduction to this Thesis as the practice of theology in the mode of commentary or marginal notes.
But the flow of his rage is interrupted. He has indeed thought to annihilate them completely, “to blot out the memory of them from humankind” (Dt 32.26). “But ...”. The risk to his own reputation causes him to hesitate. He has chosen Israel for his own, as their father begetting, cherishing, protecting and providing for them, for the sake of his name, as a testimony to the nations. Who he is, and who he is known to be, are by his own decision inextricably bound up with Israel’s welfare or otherwise: “I feared provocation by the enemy, for their adversaries might misunderstand and say, ‘Our hand is triumphant; it was not the Lord who did all this” (Dt 32.27).

Therefore, he will restrain his anger, stopping short of their extinction, “when he sees that their power is gone, neither bond nor free remaining”, not annihilated but on the verge of it, bankrupted of prestige and prosperity, as if blotted out (Dt 32.36). The sight of their desperate plight together with the superabundant violence of the human agent of the Lord’s chastisement will provoke the Lord to act on their behalf (even as their unfaithfulness had provoked his wrath against them), compassionately to enact their sure vindication (Dt 32.36, cf., 28-35).

Not that they are or have done anything in and of themselves to merit their vindication at his hands. It is just that they are his own, his first-born and his portion, his elect and covenant partner, the people on whom he has set his seal. The ground of their vindication lies entirely outside themselves, in him. As he has brought them into disrepute on account of their betrayal of that groundedness, so will he vindicate them by virtue of that groundedness, or in other words, for his own sake: “For I lift up my hand to heaven, and swear: As I live forever ...” (Dt 32.40).806

And yet, and as such, their vindication will be a living and life-giving testimony to themselves, and also to their enemies. To their enemies, because though they were instrumental in Israel’s punishment, neither they nor their gods will play any part in Israel’s restoration. They will not therefore be able to claim more than that they were the Lord’s instrument, will not be able to boast that they were triumphant over Israel in

806 Cf., “Our ancestors ... rebelled against the Most High at the Red Sea. Yet he saved them for his name’s sake, so that he might make known his mighty power” (Ps 106.7f).
and of themselves alone – that “it was not the Lord who did all this” (Dt 32.27). In vindicating Israel, the Lord will mock the impotence of his enemies and their gods, exposing Israel’s folly, and their enemies’ folly in looking to those gods who are no gods for refuge. “Where are their gods in which they took refuge ...? Let them rise up and help you, let them be your protection” (Dt 32.37).

A testimony to his enemies, Israel’s vindication, undeserved and utterly beyond them, will also re-establish their own identity and welfare in the Lord as the one who alone has accomplished both their fall and their rising again. “See now that I, even I, am he; there is no god besides me” (Dt 32.39). Yahweh, the ‘I am’, is who he is and will be whom he will be not apart from but with his people in judgment and salvation. Precisely as the Lord acts of himself and for his own sake, he achieves vindication and restoration for his people, and the just rebuke of their adversaries.807

Moses had commenced his song, promising to “proclaim the name of the Lord” and to “ascribe greatness to our God” (Dt 32.3). Now he sums up all that he has subsequently been given to say in a concluding celebration of the Lord’s sovereign freedom and almighty power in judgment and salvation (Dt 32.39-42). More precisely, and this applies to almost all of the second half of the canticle, the tongue is Moses’, but the voice is the Lord’s. Only in the last verse (Dt 32.43) does Moses’ voice return in a summons to the nations to praise Israel’s God, and in praising him to “praise ... his people”.808 His elect and covenant partner, they are “his children”. Those who hate them hate him, so that in “aveng[ing] the blood of his children” he “take[s] vengeance on his adversaries”. He will be neither known nor worshipped apart from them, but only with and for them: “He will repay those who hate him, and cleanse the land for his people”.

807 Cf., “For their [Israel’s] sake he [the Lord] remembered his covenant and showed compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love” (Ps 106.45).

808 Quotations in the rest of this paragraph are from Dt 32.43.
In sum, Moses’ song is a dramatic and comprehensive portrait of the Lord as Israel’s father, their creator and sustainer, who will not hold them guiltless but chastise them severely for their idolatry and rebellion, but who also will not see them utterly destroyed, but redeem them for the sake of his own name, the glory of which, in Israel and among the nations, he has inextricably bound up with his steadfastness toward Israel, his firstborn son.

These same themes recur in the oracles of Israel’s prophets. We may note in passing Jeremiah 3.19, where the Lord, anticipating that his peculiar faithfulness to Israel in granting them “the most beautiful heritage of all the nations” will evoke their corresponding faithfulness to him – specifically that “you would call me, My Father, and ... follow me” – is repeatedly disappointed by their inexhaustible capacity for “faithlessness” and rebellion (Jer 3.19-25).

The ensuing chapters are an almost uninterrupted indictment by the Lord of his disobedient son until as an oasis in a wilderness the prophet is given to announce an extended promise of restoration (Jer 30-32). The disappointed father of chapter 3 has eclipsed his fatherhood behind the dark clouds of his outrage; but the days are surely coming when, “deeply moved” by their outcast and forgotten condition and the “incurable hurt” for which no mendicant nor medicine is available (Jer 30.12-14), he will “remember him ... my dear son ... and the child I delight in ... and surely have mercy on him” (Jer 31.20), for “I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn” (Jer 31.9).

Once again, as in Moses’ song, the Lord will act with and for Israel for the sake of his own reputation – within Israel and among the nations. Beholding Israel’s helplessness and disgrace, the nations have judged him outcast even by the Lord; therefore he will “restore health to you” (Jer 30.17). Equally, Israel will know that the Lord “by no means leaves them unpunished”, but that he has chastised them “in just measure”, so that he might restore them to himself “with thanksgiving and ... merrymaking” in the sure knowledge that even in judgment “I have loved you with an everlasting love” and “continued my faithfulness to you” (Jer 30.11, 19; 31.3).

We cannot leave these chapters without reference to the new covenant and the Davidic king. The covenant promise, “you shall be my people and I will be your God”
(Jer 30.22) has been a repeated refrain on the lips of Jeremiah, in passages of rebuke, as also in these chapters of consolation.\textsuperscript{809} It finds its true home in the midst of the glorious promise of the new covenant (Jer 31.31ff). “It will not be like the [old mosaic] covenant that they broke” (Jer 31.32) – though not because the parties to that covenant have changed; they are still the Lord, Yahweh, and his elect people, Israel. The Lord has not given up on, nor will he ever supplant, his people. The novelty of this new covenant lies in its effectiveness in creating and maintaining on Israel’s part an unbroken faithfulness to their everlastingly faithful Lord. The constitutive dynamic of their new-found and consistent faithfulness will be a decisive deed of mercy: “for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more” (Jer 31.34).

The restored Israel will serve not only Yahweh, their God, but also “David their king, whom I will raise up for them” (Jer 30.9). He will be “one of their own” and “come from their midst”, exercising not only royal but priestly privileges and responsibilities – approaching the Lord because brought near by the Lord, “for who would otherwise dare to approach me? says the Lord” (Jer 30.21).\textsuperscript{810} The covenantal intimacy of Israel and the Lord is directly related to the priestly intercession of “their prince” (Jer 30.21-22).

Finally, in this survey of Old Testament texts in which the father-son relationship of the Lord and Israel figures prominently, we come to Hosea 11. In language reminiscent of Moses’ song, the oracle commences (Hos 11.1-4) with Yahweh’s poignant reiteration of his loving upbringing of his child, Israel, from that day when “out of Egypt I called my son” (Hos 11.1). The consistent tenderness of the Lord’s protective and restorative care competes with his beloved son’s persistent, provocative, and heedless rejection and betrayal: “The more I called them, the more they went from me … I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them” (Hos 11.3). Eventually (Hos 11.5-7), the father hands his rebel son over to his own schemes, no

\textsuperscript{809} Jer 7.23; 11.4; 31.1, 33; 32.38.

\textsuperscript{810} Cf., Heb 5.4.
longer calling him back to himself and healing him, but abandoning him to the violent treatment of his preferred companions: “My people are bent on turning away from me. To the Most High they call, but he does not raise them up at all” (Hos 11.7).

But, even as he gives up on his son there is the most dramatic turn of events, a turn of events that reflects a more dramatic turn within God himself. His determined rejection of his elect is confronted by his more determined decision to withdraw that rejection (“How can I give you up ... my heart recoils within me ... I will not execute my fierce anger”) in favour of his inexhaustible, covenantal compassion for them (“my compassion grows warm and tender ... I will not again destroy Ephraim”) (Hos 11.8f).

As in Moses’ song and Jeremiah’s restoration oracles, so here: the Lord’s decision to put away his justified wrath in favour of his mercy and loving-kindness does not depend upon any outside influence, and especially not on Israel’s penitent love which “like a morning cloud, like the dew ... goes away early” (Hos 6.4), but only upon himself and his sovereign freedom to be and do what he will be and do.811 As Israel’s father, “the Holy One in your midst”, he “will not come in wrath” but with blessing, “for I am God and no mortal” (11.9).

Moreover, his gracious turning to them will be effective, as the lion’s roar is to its cubs, bringing his rebel children back to him. Hosea’s language points to an asymmetrically related double agency in the return, the Lord’s decision and deed liberating Israel for a corresponding decision and deed: “when he roars, his children shall come trembling ... they shall come trembling ... and I will return them to their homes, says the Lord” (11.10f).

I have undertaken this extended survey of significant moments in the Gospels that epitomise Jesus’ relationship with God as Father and then similarly outstanding occasions in the Old Testament where the covenant between Israel and Israel’s God is similarly depicted, with a view to rendering explicit what is comprehended in the first

811 With explicit reference to von Rad, Walter Brueggemann connects this text with Abraham’s intercession on behalf of Sodom (Walter Brueggemann, Genesis [Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982], 173 [hereafter cited as Brueggemann, Genesis].
word of Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane. Pausing before what he knows to be the supreme crisis of his life, he addresses the covenant God of his covenant people, the steadfastly faithful Father of his elect, beloved, and commissioned son, Israel. Himself a son of Israel, he approaches Israel’s God and Father as the one whom that same Father has repeatedly designated as his own, the long-promised Son of David, elect, beloved, well-pleasing in his sight, and specifically commissioned to restore to faithful and responsible covenant partnership his recalcitrant son, Israel.

Of the one to whom Jesus draws near here in the garden, in light of what we have learned, we may properly say the following. He is the Father who will by no means ignore the persistent rebelliousness of his children, who on the contrary judges it with dreadful severity. He is the Father who has on more than one occasion seriously considered breaking covenant with Israel altogether, permanently rejecting them as his people. He is the Father who as often as he has thought on rejection has relented and, for the sake of his name, shown himself to be the more abundantly merciful. He is the Father who from among his elect from time to time has both provided and heeded priestly intercessors on Israel’s behalf.

“take this cup from me …. And being in agony he was praying very fervently; and his sweat was like great drops of blood” (Lk 22. 42, 44)

This has often been taken to be indicative of the authentically human response of Jesus to the awful suffering (physical, psychical, and spiritual) which he is about to undergo. But what if it has to do less with his personal fate, and more with the fate of Israel, albeit as that is inextricably bound up with and determined by his own fate? More specifically, may it be that Israel is about to press its rebellion against the Father to such an extreme as to risk final rejection and, with that, forfeiture once and for all of its privileged status as his elect and covenant partner?
On more than one occasion, and increasingly in the days before Gethsemane, Jesus has suggested exactly that. To take just one example. All three Synoptics include the so-called parable of the wicked tenants, as one of Jesus’ last parables before his passion. The tenants’ abusive treatment of the servants sent by the absent owner to collect a share of the harvest, and finally their murder of the owner’s “beloved son” (Lk 20.13) provokes the owner’s wrath. He returns, destroys the original tenants, and entrusts his vineyard to others who will act responsibly. The sentence of judgment and rejection is explicitly applied to Israel’s leaders, the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees. Some commentators discern a more general rejection of Israel as a whole. It is especially Jesus’ words (included only in Matthew’s version) that lend some credence to the wider application: “Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people (ethnei) that produces the fruits of the kingdom” (Mt 21.43).

In plotting to destroy their Messiah, are the elect people of Yahweh (not merely the leadership but the whole nation) on the verge of committing an act of betrayal so extreme as to risk forfeiture once and for all of covenant partnership with the Lord?


813 “[T]he transference of the promise from the Jews who reject the son to a new people of God is here described as a punishment for the murder of the son” (W. G. Kümmel, Promise and Fulfilment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus, trans. D. M. Barton [London, SCM, 1957], 83). “The message of the parable is stated explicitly: God’s Kingdom will be taken from Israel and given to a people that ‘produces the proper fruits’” (Eduard Schweizer, The Good News according to Matthew, trans. David E. Green [Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975], 414; hereafter cited as, Schweizer, Matthew).

814 Matthew does not employ the usual word for designating the people of Israel (laou, cf., 21.23), but “ethnei”, more usually translated “nation” and applied to the gentiles.

815 It is an act of betrayal even more extreme than the idolatrous worship of the golden calf at Sinai. Barth’s comments on that earlier incident are instructive in this regard: “What has happened has brought everything into question – the election, the grace, the covenant of God, the separation and divine mission and therefore the existence of Israel. It seems as though the dissolution of the covenant must at once follow its institution .... So greatly, so radically, so profoundly did that which Israel willed and did – its sin – run counter to that which God willed and did, that it seemed as though God could only renounce Israel in His anger and break off the connexion which He had made” (CD 4/1, 425). Might we not even more appropriately say the same of Israel’s rejection of the Messiah?
“[Your enemies] will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God” (Lk 19.44).\textsuperscript{816} Does Jesus come to the garden on the eve of the long anticipated Day of the Lord knowing with Amos that it is to be a day of darkness and not light, of judgment and not vindication, – the Day of the Lord, the same Lord who, “slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, yet by no means clear[s] the guilty” (Num 14.18; cf., Ex 34.6f)?

If Jesus so comes into Gethsemane, must he not also come knowing that when Israel has before drawn near to the brink, one or another of the Lord’s chosen has “stood in the breach before him, to turn away his wrath from destroying them” (Ps 106.23)? Is it not altogether probable that in making his plea to the Father he does so as the consummate heir to that remarkable line of Israel’s intercessors? With a view to providing evidence for such being the case, it will be useful to observe some of his most outstanding predecessors (of whom there are only relatively few).\textsuperscript{817}

The “first great example and the lasting model” of such intercession is somewhat eccentric in that Israel is not the intended beneficiary.\textsuperscript{818} Abraham offers his repeated pleas for Sodom, where his nephew, Lot, has made his home. The incentive for his

\textsuperscript{816} These words are spoken specifically about Jerusalem. Some have suggested that Jesus denounces Jerusalem as the seat of Israel’s power-brokers, in anticipation of their immanent collapse in favour of those in Israel whom they have oppressed, the poor and the meek (Mt 5.5), or the marginalized northerners (“can anything good come out of Nazareth” [Jn 1.46]), or even the Samaritans and, beyond Israel’s borders, the Gentiles. But we must remember other passages in which the focus of Jesus warnings and rebukes are not so narrowly defined: Mt 11.20ff where Jesus “reproach[es] the cities [Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum] in which most of his deeds of power had been done, because they did not repent.” (11.20); cf., Lk 4.23ff.

\textsuperscript{817} Cf., Ezek 22.30! Brueggemann’s calls it “a minority report” (Brueggemann, \textit{Genesis}, 173).

appeal is expressed in his question of the Lord, “Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?” (Gn 18.23). In dramatic fashion the Lord confirms what amounts to being Abraham’s theological judgment, which he has expressed in a series of rhetorical appeals, “Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?” (Gn 18.25). At once insistent and humble, Abraham proposes to the Lord a series of hypothetical cases in which the number of the wicked increasingly outweighs that of the righteous. Still the Lord “will forgive the whole place for their sake” (Gn 18.26, cf., 28, 29, 30, 31, 32). The Lord’s determination to judge many wicked may be reversed on account of the presence of a few righteous among them. How few is left unclear, as the Lord departs before Abraham can present his case on behalf of less than ten righteous (Gn.18.33). And the Lord’s decision against Sodom is not reversed for Lot’s sake, though he and his daughters are spared.

What are we to conclude from this? Has Abraham’s intercession gone unheeded? It must have seemed so to him as he viewed the smoking devastation that had only the day before been “the cities of the Plain” (Gn 19.29). Certainly, the Lord has not abided by the hypothetical terms of Abraham’s pleas, but has disposed over Sodom as he has seen fit. But neither had Abraham presumed to make demands of the Lord, as witnessed by his repeatedly representing himself as humble supplicant: “Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes…. Oh do not let the Lord be angry if I speak …” (Gn 18.27, 30, cf., 31, 32). If the Lord has acted on his own terms, yet Abraham’s pleas were not in vain. Even as he contemplates the ruin of the cities, the text concludes: “So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the Plain, God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow …” (Gn 19.29). From time to time the Lord’s servants will make intercession on behalf of others. The Lord will act as he sees fit, proving again and again that he is Yahweh, the Lord who will be and do what he will be and do. Disposing in sovereign freedom, he will nonetheless take into account the vicarious appeals of his servants, even apparently

819 I say this is Abraham’s incentive, but it is evident that he does so in response to the Lord’s prior initiative (Gn 18.17-22).
altering his original course of action, though not always exactly as they have willed him to.

This pattern of prospective judgment, vicarious intercession, and judgment tempered with mercy recurs throughout Israel’s scriptures.\(^{820}\) Pre-eminent amongst Israel’s intercessors is Moses,\(^{821}\) most memorably in his double intervention on Israel’s behalf in face of Yahweh’s wrathful determination to annihilate (“consume”) his people for their idolatrous obeisance before the golden calf (Ex 32.11-14, 30-32; cf., Dt 9.25-29). He implores the Lord not to destroy them but to remember his covenant with them, how he redeemed them from Egypt as “your very own possession” (Dt 9.26), and promised to the patriarchs that their descendants would multiply and flourish in a land to which he would bring them. He further reminds him that having declared before the Egyptians his commitment to bring his people out of Egypt for their good, his now cursing them will be interpreted as a betrayal of his original intent: “Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them ...’” (Ex 32.12; cf., Dt 9.28). In his second appeal, Moses acknowledges the grave sin of the people and the justice of Yahweh’s wrath. Nevertheless, he pleads with him to forgive them, saying only that if he will not forgive then he should “blot me out of the book that you have written” (Ex 32.32).

This last is particularly remarkable, given that the Lord has declared his intention to destroy his people in order that he might begin again, reconstituting his elect as a new and greater nation out of Moses’ offspring (Ex 32.10; cf., Num 14.12; Dt 9.14). Moses will have none of it. If it is not to be this people, unfaithful though they be, it must be no people. Probably his call to be blotted out is a cry of despair in face of

\(^{820}\) As will become evident in what follows, no necessity or inevitability attaches to this threefold pattern. The Lord remains sovereignly free in exercising judgment and mercy.

\(^{821}\) Aaron and Phineas take their place alongside Moses on a couple of occasions (cf., Pss 99.6 and 106.30).
his people’s betrayal and the Lord’s apparently merciless wrath. Is there though a glimpse of something more? He does not even for a moment contemplate the Lord’s proposal that he should become the father of a new nation. Personally chosen by and identified with the Lord of Israel, his identity is equally bound up with Israel itself so that if the Lord will not forgive them, he refuses not to remain in the closest possible solidarity with them even in their sin and under judgment – he will be blotted out along with them.

But is there still more? More that is discernible, if at all, only as it were in hindsight, in light of the cultus for so much of which Moses is said to have been responsible – the Passover lamb, sin offerings, and the Day of Atonement; in light too of Isaiah’s cycle of oracles regarding the Lord servant, especially the suffering servant of Isaiah 53; and in light of the career of the one greater than Moses, Jesus Messiah. In other words, is there somewhere in Moses’ cry the offering of himself not only in solidarity with Israel, but in substitution for them? Before returning to the Lord to intercede for the second time on behalf of his disobedient people, Moses had explained to Israel exactly what it was that he was doing, and his words to them are remarkable, words that could well have become part of the liturgy of the Day of Atonement, spoken by the priest before entering into the Holy of Holies: “On the next day Moses said to the people, ‘You have sinned a great sin. But now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin” (Ex 32.30).

822 On another occasion, overwhelmed by the isolation and heavy burden of responsibility that is his as Israel’s leader in the wilderness, Moses pleads with the Lord that he would “put me to death at once … and do not let me see my misery” (Num 11.15).

823 Reflecting on “Deuteronomy’s picture of Moses”, von Rad writes: “Here, indeed, the act of intercession is more than just mentioned – Deuteronomy wants to move its readers with the picture of a man who, while greatly afraid, took God’s wrath on himself, and who was to die vicariously outside the promised land” (Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology vol. 2 [London: SCM Press Ltd, 1975], 276 [hereafter cited as von Rad, Old Testament Theology 2]).

824 Barth’s observations on this incident are worth noting, particularly in light of what I take to be the implicit suggestion of the link between Moses and Jesus: “Anticipating the place of Israel among the nations (and in face of the now evident and unforgivable sin of Israel), … [Moses plays] the role of a mediator between this people and its God …. [T]his man [Moses] dares to remind God of His own promise, to appeal to His faithfulness, beseeching Him, but also very definitively remonstrating with Him
Like Moses, Samuel twice steps into the breach (1 Sm 7.5-9; 12.19-23) and in response to his prayers, his whole burnt offering of a sucking lamb, and the people’s fasting and repentance, the Lord’s wrath is averted – “For the Lord will not cast away his people, for his great name’s sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself” (1 Sm 12.22). Samuel acknowledges his particular and solemn obligation to intercede before the Lord on Israel’s behalf: “Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you” (1 Sm 12.23).

Amos is twice granted visions of immanent disaster in store for Israel at the Lord’s hand. Twice he “begs” the Lord to take into account Israel’s frailty (“How can Jacob stand? He is so small!”) and to “forgive” them, to “cease” his course of wrath. Twice the Lord “relents” (Am 7.1-6). 

The object of a vicious plot on the part of his own people, Jeremiah prays that the Lord would come to his defence, not forgiving them, but “deal[ing] with them while you are angry” (Jer 18.23). Yet, in the midst of his prayer for vengeance, he bids the Lord remember “how I stood before you to speak good for them to turn away your wrath from them” (Jer 18.20). And indeed, Jeremiah’s fit of outrage in this passage is exceptional by comparison with the far more numerous occasions when his people’s impending doom at the hands of their Lord’s wrath has drawn forth his lamentation and tears, and a yearning to intercede on their behalf that has been cut off, repeatedly forbidden by the Lord’s direct command (Jer 7.16; 11.14; 14.11f; 16.5-9). So extreme are Israel’s rebellion and the Lord’s determination to judge that, “though Moses and

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825 Immediately thereafter the Lord shows Amos further visions of disaster that evoke no corresponding plea from his servant, the only relief coming in a brief but vivid promise of everlasting restoration right at the end of the book that is entirely unaccounted for, except as the mysterious and gracious decision of the Lord: “I will restore ... I will plant ... and they shall never again be plucked up” (Am 9.13-15).
Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go!” (Jer 15.1). The plight of Jeremiah on the eve of the Babylonian invasion and Jesus’ plight in Gethsemane seem especially resonant of a similar confluence of themes, including the stubborn resistance and impenitence of the people, a violent plot, the advent of the Lord in judgment, the stern warnings, lamentable tears, and paradoxical but unshakeable solidarity of each with both the Lord of the covenant and his rebel covenant partner.

Two more things are worthy of note before leaving Jeremiah. The first is the fluidity that attaches to the prophetic “I”. Jeremiah’s voice is his own, in outrage as we have just heard it, or in anguish and despair. Then, his voice is that of the people, here penitent, there and more often rebellious. But most of all, his voice is the Lord’s, in command, in pity, in promise, in argument, in warning, and above all in judgment. And these three voices are not always easily distinguishable. Possessed of his own personal identity, the prophet functions as intermediary, representing each of the covenant parties to the other. Indeed, we may go so far as to say that he is both parties as he is also himself, though himself not altogether as a discrete third, but as inextricably bound up in the identities and agencies of both parties. This mediatorial identity of the prophet is writ large in the career of the Messiah, not least in Gethsemane.

The second matter of note before leaving Jeremiah is a repeated description of what it is in Israel that offends the Lord. It is a conflict of wills, or rather, Israel’s determination not to heed the will of the Lord but to follow the dictates of their own unbridled wills, to live as a law unto themselves. In the near future, when Israel’s


neighbours (“the nations”) enquire about the cause of the devastation that has befallen Jerusalem, they will be told that their citizens “abandoned the covenant of the Lord their God” to serve other gods, renouncing their God-given identity and vocation as Yahweh’s elect covenant partner (Jer 22.8-9). The people of Jerusalem and of “all its towns”, the nation as such, stubbornly shut their ears to the Lord’s words of election, promise, command, and warning (Jer 19.15). Instead, they gathered about themselves prophets who, not having “stood in the council of the Lord” but speaking “their own minds”, tell them what they want to hear, reassuring them in their chosen courses of action (Jer 23.16-22). In all of this they resemble their ancestors, but they have also outstripped them (“behaved worse than your ancestors”) in that they have rejected the will of the Lord in order each “to follow your evil, stubborn will”, making their own plans, as if each had adopted the motto, not the Lord’s will, but my will be done (Jer 16.11f; 18.11f; cf., 23.17). It is a parody avant le temp of the prayer that the Messiah will pray in Gethsemane: he will contradict their stubborn independence of will even as he remains in strictest solidarity with and for them.

All that we have observed here of those throughout Israel’s history who have stood in the breach and made intercession before Yahweh to avert his wrath, is wonderfully brought together in the so-called Servant Songs of Second Isaiah, particularly the last in the series.829 The identity of the servant is notoriously ambiguous – Israel itself, some sub-set of the nation, a historical (past, present, or future) individual, or an ideal figure?830 The ambiguity is epitomised in the second song: no sooner have we been informed by the servant that “the Lord said to me, ‘You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified’”, than the servant tells us that “the

829 “... Isaiah 53 is only a recapitulation of what is to be found in almost every chapter of the Old Testament ...” (CD 1/2, 89). “That friends of God interceded to plead for their fellow men, especially for the chosen people, was a recurring motif in the history of Israel: Abraham ... Moses ... prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel .... Yet no one suffered so deeply as the mysterious, nameless Servant [of Isaiah 53]” (Balthasar, Light of the Word, 67). “Perhaps this [Isaiah 53] is the quintessence of biblical teaching about vicarious suffering in redemptive ways. This poem seems to have made a premise of the question in Gn 18” (Brueggemann, Genesis, 174).

Lord ... formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him” (Is 49.3, 5). The servant is Israel, and he is as it were at one remove from Israel, commissioned by Israel’s Lord to bring his people back to him. The distinction from Israel is continued in the same song as the Lord extends the scope of his mission to include not merely the restoration of “the survivors of Israel” but his being “a light to the nations” so that the Lord’s salvation “may reach to the end of the earth” (Is 49.6; cf., 42.6; 52.15).

But, in terms of our present theme, that of the Lord’s servant stepping into the breach in face of the Lord’s wrath, it is the climactic fourth song that is especially significant (Is 52.13-53.12). It is the new elements here that I want to concentrate upon. The servant’s mission, the Lord’s will for him, that he should suffer vicariously for the salvation and healing of many, is profoundly hidden. He is universally held to be of no account, an object of God’s disfavour, worthy only of contempt – in language reminiscent of the second song, a despised and abhorrent, disfigured slave (cf., Is 49.7). It is not altogether clear to what extent, if any, the servant knows and willingly participates in undertaking the Lord’s purpose for him. The revelatory contradiction of the servant’s contemporaries’ contemptuous assessment is accomplished entirely by the Lord. And we are not told how. Only that the impossible and the unbelievable will be rendered self-evident: “that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate” (Is 52.15). All that had rendered the servant an object of universal derision will be shown to have been the very opposite – that wherein his God-given glory resides (Is 52.13, 15; 53.12).

Again though, it is not altogether clear that in the midst of his deepest woe the servant is not himself overwhelmed by the darkness. He goes to his futureless doom (“Who could have imagined his future?” – including the servant himself?) not actively

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831 This is especially the case if as seems likely the servant songs have their origin in the holocaust of the Babylonian invasion and subsequent exile of Israel. That Israel’s Lord might turn Israel’s grievous fate into vicarious and redemptive suffering for the nations is surely not something that Israel could have known, let alone willingly participated in – apart of course from the revelatory voice of a prophet in their midst granting them the Lord’s word concerning their God-given mission.
embracing his suffering,\(^\text{832}\) but the passive object of the contempt and humiliation, pain and affliction, and finally shameful death and burial, all actively laid upon him by the Lord – for “it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain” (Is 53.10). The dreadful silence of the servant may conceal his awareness of what is really happening or it may be mute evidence of the profundity of the darkness by which even he is overwhelmed, so that it is only on the other side of his humiliation, “out of his anguish [that] he shall see light [and] ... find satisfaction through his knowledge” (Is 53.11).

Regardless, wittingly or unwittingly, by the suffering to which the Lord has appointed him, the Lord “makes [the servant’s] life an offering for sin” (Is 53.10). So that, it seems appropriate to say that in the person, the life and death, of the servant, the Lord himself “steps into the breach” on behalf of his rebel covenant partner – “[making] intercession for the transgressors ... bearing the sin of many ... making many righteous” (Is 53.12, 11).\(^\text{833}\) Because it is at the Lord’s initiative and by his activity that the servant’s suffering is rendered vicariously salvific, the servant himself can be said derivatively, that is in light of the final cause of his suffering, to be the agent of his God-given mission – to “make many righteous and ... bear their iniquities”, to have “poured out himself to death and ... made intercession for the transgressors” – even though in the depths of his suffering he may have been as convinced of its futility as were those who observed it.

Or, perhaps the servant songs, originating in Israel’s Babylonian affliction understood as in some sense the consummation of a history of suffering whether of the nation or of individuals like Moses, Elijah, and Jeremiah, hold out the promise of some

\(^{832}\) The passion of the servant in this fourth servant song contrasts with the servant’s active initiative in the third song: “I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard: I did not hide my face from insult and spitting” (Is 50.6).

\(^{833}\) Von Rad discerns a direct link between “the conversations Abraham had with God about Sodom” and “the prophetic utterances about the Servant of God who works salvation ‘for the many’ (Is. LIII. 5, 10)” (Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology vol. 1* [London: SCM Press Ltd, 1975], 394f).
future sufferer whose ordeal is offensively though innocently (cf., Is 53.9), willingly, and vicariously undertaken in obedience to the will of the Lord.834

Returning to Gethsemane, may it be that Jesus approaches the Father in the spirit of those in Israel who, from Abraham on, “stepped into the breach” in face of the Lord’s wrath and impending judgment upon his rebel people? A parable found only in Luke suggests this is indeed his stance. Jesus tells the parable on his way to Jerusalem. Its immediate context and, as Luke relates, its occasion is a report of Pilate’s killing of a number of Galileans in the act of offering sacrifice at Jerusalem. Recalling another recent calamity in Jerusalem, Jesus pointedly rejects any suggestion that in either case those who died must have been worse sinners than their more fortunate contemporaries, and sternly warns his listeners that a like doom awaits them unless they repent (Lk 13.1-5). The sense of impending crisis and judgment has been predominant throughout this part of the Lucan travel account (cf., Lk 12.20, 40, 46, 49-56) and is decisive in the parable that follows.

The owner of an orchard complains to his gardener about a particular fig tree. Though it ought to bear fruit annually it has been barren for three successive years. Unfruitful, it is merely taking up valuable space, “wasting the soil” (Lk 13.7). The gardener pleads for a year’s grace so that he may specially attend to the tree’s welfare with a view to its finally becoming productive. If even his best efforts prove futile, then let the owner order its removal.

Like the vineyard, the fig tree is a familiar Old Testament symbol for Israel. The image is usually deployed to represent Yahweh’s frustrated attempts at gathering his covenant people to himself, frustrated by their rebelliously determined pursuit of ends they have chosen for themselves. “When I wanted to gather them, says the Lord, there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree” (Jer 8.13). Why? Because “all of

834 Given the content of the Gethsemane prayer, it is noteworthy that the chapters that separate the third and fourth of Second Isaiah’s servant songs include Yahweh’s twice repeated assurance that the cup of his wrath which they have “drunk at the Lord’s hand” will be taken from them and “put into the hand of your tormentors”, and Israel “shall drink no more from the bowl of my wrath” (Is 51.17, 22f).
them turn to their own course”; they have “refused to return ... no one repents of wickedness” (Jer 8. 5f).\textsuperscript{835}

In line with the prophets of old, Jesus sets before his people an image in which they may see themselves as Yahweh sees them, barren and fruitless, unavailable to him, unwilling to be gathered by him, with whom he in turn has lost patience so that he is on the verge of uprooting, destroying, and supplanting them as his elect and covenant partner.\textsuperscript{836} The parable serves to heighten the urgency in Jesus’ repeated exhortations to Israel to repent before they are overwhelmed by Yahweh’s annihilating wrath.\textsuperscript{837}

But, for my purposes it is the gardener’s intercession on behalf of the fig tree that gives this parable its particular significance. His plea is provoked, evoked, by the orchard owner’s announcement of his decision to get rid of the tree. Not that the gardener questions the justice of his master’s decision, as his final words, the last words of the parable, indicate: “if not [if despite another year of the gardener’s care and attention the tree still bears no fruit], you can cut it down” (Lk 13.9). Rather, he pleads for time, for a delay of the day of reckoning; time in which he will expend his every effort and expertise to render the tree fruitful (“dig around it and put manure on it” [13.8]). In effect, he stands surety for the tree, taking upon himself responsibility for its becoming fruitful, for its avoiding the fate that is otherwise decreed for it.

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\textsuperscript{835} Cf., Hos 9.10; Mic 7.1; also, Jer 24.1-10, where it is not the barrenness of the fig tree, but baskets of good and rotten figs that constitute the image. Fig tree and vine are found together in Mic 4.4 and Joel 2.22 as signs of God’s blessings (cf., Luke Timothy Johnson, \textit{The Gospel of Luke}, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 3, ed. Daviel J. Harrington, SJ [Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991], 211 [hereafter cited as Johnson, \textit{Luke}]).

\textsuperscript{836} Later in this same chapter, the theme of Israel’s resistance to being gathered by the Lord (this time not as figs but as brood of chicks) returns. Strikingly, Jesus there speaks not of the Lord in the third person but of himself in the first person as the one who has often desired to gather his people to himself, only repeatedly to be met with rejection (“but you were unwilling”) (Lk 13.34).

That this parable offers some insight into the character of Jesus’ plea in Gethsemane is further suggested by the immediately preceding pericope, in which the theme of God’s judgment of Israel is most explicitly identified with the coming of Jesus. In imagery reminiscent of John the Baptist’s (Lk 3.9, 16f), Jesus provocatively identifies himself as the active agent of that judgment: “I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled” (Lk 12.49).\(^{838}\) In the Old Testament, judgment as fire is sometimes all-consuming and annihilating, as at Sodom;\(^ {839}\) at others, discriminatory and purifying.\(^ {840}\) Whichever it is here,\(^ {841}\) Jesus yearns to see the earth set ablaze by the fire which it is his mission to enkindle.\(^ {842}\)

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\(^{839}\) Gen 19.24; cf., 2 Kgs 1.10; also, Lk 9.54, with apparently explicit reference to 2 Kgs 1.10.

\(^{840}\) Num 31.23; Is 33.14f; Jer 23.28f; especially with this last, compare Lk 3.16f.


\(^{842}\) Though the mood in these verses is one more of foreboding than of promise, the redemptive character of the judgment that Jesus has come to precipitate (as fire) and to undergo (as baptism) has been implicit in the gospel narrative at least since the account of the Transfiguration, when the term used to describe the subject of the conversation between Jesus and Moses and Elijah – “his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (Lk 9.31) – was *exodus*, recalling God’s deliverance of his elect from Egypt in a comparable act of judgment and salvation. “While the mention of *exodus* is related to the Lucan geographical perspective, the very word echoes the Exodus of Israel from Egypt to its promised land, its land of destiny” (Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 794); cf., Johnson, *Luke*, 153; also, Robert C. Tannehill, *The Gospel according to Luke*, vol. 1, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, (Philadelphia: The Fortress Press, 1986); 223f (hereafter cited as, Tannehill, *Luke*). “[T]he precise force of the word, *exodus* here is uncertain; it may refer to: ... the death of Jesus as an act of salvation, repeating the Exodus conducted by Moses” (I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [1978: Exeter, The Paternoster Press], 384 [hereafter cited as, Marshall, *Luke*]).
The active voice gives place to the passive as in his next breath Jesus announces a baptism that he is about to undergo (Lk 12.50). According to the Baptist, Jesus would baptize Israel with the Holy Spirit and fire (Lk 3.16). But here, not only does he administer that baptism; he himself must undergo it, surrendering to the fiery judgment of God. Strikingly, whereas in the previous verse the enkindling of the fire filled him with longing, the prospect of the baptism he must undergo “presses hard” upon him (pós sunexomai [Lk 12.50]). The phrase may be variously translated, depending upon which of two basic emphases is preferred: on the one hand, distress and perturbation of spirit (“how great is my anguish”, “how distressed I am”); on the other, an all-consuming preoccupation or constraint (e.g., “How I am totally governed by this”; “How am I straightened”). Is there not room for both emphases? The rapidly approaching confrontation unto death, which Jesus has predicted on more than one occasion, evidently preoccupies him and in due time will wring from him the anguished appeals of Gethsemane and the God-forsaken cry from the cross.

Balthasar is probably correct therefore in discerning a note of promise in Jesus’ talk of fire in Luke 12.49: “The fire that Jesus has come to cast upon the earth (in the Gospel reading [Lk 12. 49-53]) is the fire of divine love that will ignite men. It will begin to burn from the Cross, which is the baptism he fears” (Balthasar, Light of the Word, 340).

843 The connection between fire and baptism may be suggested by Old Testament texts in which fire and water are linked in judgment, e.g., Ps 66.12, Is 43.2.

844 NAB. This is close to Balthasar's reading, as quoted under the previous paragraph, where he says the baptism referred to here by Jesus is the Cross, “which ... he fears” (Balthasar, Light of the Word, 340).


But, we are not left to speculate as to why his imminent baptism presses so hard upon him, if we allow that his next words are his explanation. “Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division!” (Lk 12.51). The enkindling of the fire that he has come to bring and the baptism that he must endure will inaugurate and constitute the decisive day of God’s judgment, the separation of the wheat from the chaff, the wheat and the weeds, the good and the bad fish, the sheep and the goats, the wise and the foolish bridesmaids, the fruitful and the barren fig trees, the three and the two in one household (Lk 12.52f). If Yahweh has judged the nations and more particularly Israel his covenant partner in the past, he is about to bring all of that to its climactic fulfilment in an act of judgment the prospect of which evokes from Jesus repeated warnings of his fellow Jews to repent (Lk 13.3, 5), to recognize the urgency of the present time (Lk 12.56), “the time of your visitation” (Lk 19.44), before it is too late and the door is shut (Lk 13.25), and they are left outside “weeping and gnashing their teeth” (Lk 13.27). Jesus’ distress then is occasioned not so much by his personal fate as by the annihilating wrath that threatens to fall on unfruitful Israel, a distress that not only drives him to issue urgent warnings to them, but also as depicted in the parable of the barren fig tree compels him to step into the breach and to make intercession on their behalf.

Not that his personal fate is irrelevant. Far from it, as the images of fire and baptism indicate. It belongs to him and his mission amongst them that he should bring them into the fire of Yahweh’s judgment because they will be judged according to their recognition or rejection of him as their Messiah, as Simeon had predicted to his mother in the temple while Jesus was still a child: “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too” (Lk 2.34f). But, as their Messiah, Jesus must himself undergo the judgment that is to come upon them; and, as the saying about his baptism so immediately connected to that about the fire implies, his entering into judgment will be determinative for whatever is to follow in regard to Israel’s judgment.
Neither of these two verses in Luke about the fire and the baptism (12.49, 50) has an exact parallel in the other Gospels. However, there is a text in Mark that may be compared with Jesus’ reference to the baptism that he must undergo, a comparison that is especially significant for the bearing of all of this on understanding Jesus’ anguished plea in Gethsemane. Jesus combines with the image of his approaching baptism the image of a cup that he must drink (Mark 10.38f). Though the cup may sometimes symbolize joy and salvation (e.g., Pss 23.5; 116.13), here and in Gethsemane it more likely represents the dreadful sorrow and suffering occasioned by the onslaught of God’s wrathful judgment. “The parallel image of the cup in Mk 10.38 has the sense of submitting to divine judgment .... Jesus himself then shares in the judgment which is to come upon the world”.

Fire, baptism, and a cup all apparently descriptive of the consummation of Jesus’ mission, a consummation for which he longs, by which he is determined and constrained, and which certainly in Gethsemane, but perhaps also in anticipation here too, deeply distresses him.

It is often suggested that his anguished appeal in Gethsemane to be relieved of “this cup” is occasioned by the prospect of his own dreadful suffering and death. While

848 Cf., Fitzmyer, 994; also, Marshall, 545.

“The thought underlying baptisma and baptizomai here is that of being overwhelmed in trouble that is the burden of human sin and the judgment of God upon it .... Jesus uses the same expression in Lk 12.50 with the same meaning, of the divinely appointed tribulation culminating in his death through which he must pass” (C. E. B. Cranfield, The Gospel According to Saint Mark [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959], 338 [hereafter cited as, Cranfield, Mark]).

849 E.g., Pss 11.6; 75.8; Is 51.17-23; Jer 25.15-28; 49.12; 51.7; Lam 4.21f; Ezek 23.31-4; Hab 2.15-16; Zech 12.2; also, Ps 60.3; Job 21.20; Is 63.6; Ob 16; also, Rev 14.10; 16.19; 17.4; 18.6.

850 Marshall, Luke, 547. “The thought underlying baptisma and baptizomai here is that of being overwhelmed in trouble that is the burden of human sin and the judgment of God upon it .... Jesus uses the same expression in Lk 12.50 with the same meaning, of the divinely appointed tribulation culminating in his death through which he must pass” (C. E. B. Cranfield, The Gospel According to Saint Mark [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959], 338 [hereafter cited as, Cranfield, Mark]).
I do not wish to deny that altogether, the reading that I wish to propose is determined more by what we have seen here of God’s judgment upon Israel and the gardener’s intercession in the parable of the barren fig tree. In face of the immediate prospect of the collision of his people’s ultimate act of betrayal in the execution of their heaven-sent messiah and their just and therefore final judgment at the hand of his and his people’s Father, Yahweh, Jesus steps into the breach to plead for more time, for a postponement, for mercy and patience.

“if you will (ei Boulei)” (Lk 22.42)

Mark’s and Matthew’s reference to what is possible for the Father (panta dunata soi, Mk 14.36, ei dunaton estin, Mt 26.39) is in Luke an explicit and perhaps more personal appeal\(^{851}\) to the Father’s willingness. The appeal is conditional, the Son as always attendant upon the Father. There is not the least hint of his even countenancing resistance to or departure from the Father’s will. Rather, in making his appeal as a son of Israel he acknowledges, as Abraham had owned repeatedly in his appeals on Sodom’s behalf, the sovereign freedom of Israel’s, and therefore his, God.\(^{852}\)

It is the unanimous and emphatic testimony of Israel’s scriptures that Yahweh will be and do what he will be and do. And yet, or better, and therefore (because ingredient in his covenantal determination towards Israel), he repeatedly gives heed to the intercessory prayers of his servants. They in their turn repeatedly acknowledge his patience in giving heed to them and his freedom with respect to their pleas, on one


\(^{852}\) Walter Eichrodt confirms what our survey of Old Testament texts disclosed: “So far as atoning efficacy is concerned, even this remains dependent on Yahweh’s free will to forgive, and can be regarded only as a means subservient to that forgiveness…. No support whatever is given to the notion that Man can exert any kind of pressure on his decision” (Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament vol. 2*, trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), 452, 476 (hereafter, Eichrodt, *Old Testament Theology 2*).
notable occasion conceding that they “dare” so approach him only because he himself has brought them near (cf., Jer 30.21). In the same spirit, as “their prince” whom Yahweh long ago promised to “raise up for them” as “one of their own ... come from their midst”, Jesus approaches the Father to make priestly intercession on behalf of his covenant people (cf., Jer 30.21-22). \(^{853}\)

“take this cup from me” (Lk 22.42)

Jesus pleads with the Father to find consistent with his purpose for Israel and the nations, the withdrawal of the cup of suffering which he, Jesus, must otherwise drink. Until now, Jesus has repeatedly spoken of his passion and death as a non-negotiable obligation laid upon him, the goal towards which his life and mission are necessarily orientated by the Father’s commission. \(^{854}\) But now, on the threshold as it were, he stumbles, \(^{855}\) recoils. \(^{856}\) The evangelists describe his anguish (Lk 22.44), bewilderment and fear, and a sorrow that threatens his very hold on life itself (Mt 26.33f; Mk 14.33f; cf., Jn 12.27; Heb 5.7). The contrast with other brave men and women who have faced death in all its outrageous and excruciating forms with notable dignity and self-control has repeatedly evoked the question as to the ingredients of the cup which Jesus prayed the Father to remove. The question is rendered that much more difficult when an

\(^{853}\) It is especially the writer to the Hebrews who develops the complementarity of the royal and priestly offices of Jesus (Hebrews, chap’s 1, 5, and 7; in chapter 5 with implicit (if not explicit) reference to Gethsemane [5.5-10]).

\(^{854}\) Made plain in various ways, this is especially the force of the dei that makes its first appearance on the lips of the 12 year-old Jesus (Lk 2.49) and recurs again and again thereafter (Lk 9.22; 13.33; 17.25; 22.37; 24.7; cf., 24.44; Acts 26.23). See also my discussion above of Balthasar’s treatment of this same theme (cf., TD 3.167, 225).

\(^{855}\) CD 4/1, 264-5; cf., 4/2, 250.

\(^{856}\) Maximus the Confessor, Disputation with Pyrrhus [PG 297 bc]; see Appendix 2.
answer is sought (as it is here) that will account for Jesus’ plea without compromise either to the consistency of his obedience of the Father unto death or to the personal and essential union of his (unconfused and undivided) divine and human agencies.

It will be useful briefly to rehearse Meyendorff’s, Barth’s, and Balthasar’s answers, as between them they comprehend much of what has been said on the subject throughout the tradition when the concern has been to honour the criteria of Christ’s uninterrupted faithfulness and the coherency of his divine and human agencies.

Reading Gethsemane in concert with Maximus the Confessor, Meyendorff identifies the contents of the cup with the suffering and death that created humanity by nature, by virtue of the *imago Dei*, properly fears as the alien contradiction of that flourishing vitality for which God originally made it. In recoiling before the cross, Jesus fulfils the created *logos* or *telos*, the natural movement, of that *vere homo* which is his as the incarnate Son of God. Moreover, because it is the will of the triune God that the Son should undertake his human career according to the dynamic peculiar to human obedience, his faithfulness unto death requires struggle and efforts of will, multiple and successive decisions in ever changing circumstances, and, specifically in Gethsemane, prayer that includes a moment of appropriate hesitation in face of the threat of annihilation, a moment that permits him the more determinedly to continue along the way of the cross as the way of the world’s salvation.857

857 Meyendorff’s explanation of Christ’s hesitation to drink the cup as reflective of the natural and therefore appropriate human recoil at the threat of suffering and death is indebted (as we observed in the earlier chapter devoted to Meyendorff) not only to Maximus (esp., Maximus the Confessor, *Disputation with Pyrrhus* [PG 297 bc]) but also to John of Damascus (*De fide orth.*, III, 20, col. 1081 ab, quoted by Meyendorff, *Christ*, 165).

Thomas Aquinas offers a similar explanation in terms of the natural will and activity of Christ’s humanity (*Summa Theologiae* 3a.18&19 [in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae*, vols. 1-60, General Editor, Thomas Gilby OP (London and New York: Blackfriars, 1963, etc.)].) It is impossible to do justice to him in a few lines, but we may briefly note his discussions of the implications of what he refers to as the divine decree that the Son would permit his human nature to determine his incarnate existence. With respect to the divine decree Thomas refers repeatedly to crucial texts in John of Damascus to the effect that, in John’s own words, "*by the generosity of the divine will the flesh was allowed to suffer and to do what was normal for it*"; and again, that the Son of God "*allowed his flesh [Thomas adds, ‘before the passion’] to do and to suffer all that is characteristic of its nature* [Thomas adds, ‘similarly he allowed all the powers of his soul to function according to their nature’]" (14.1ad2; 18.5). This is especially important for explaining why variance between the desires of the two wills does not entail any kind of
Jesus pleads for the cup to be removed, according to Balthasar, because his drinking it will entail his irreversible identification with humanity in its groundless and insistent refusal of the grace of God. In all the events of his passion which must ensue upon his acceptance of the cup, he will permit the world to load upon him the full burden of its rebellion against God. So complete will be his solidarity with them that he must become the focus and representative object of God’s annihilating wrath and judgment. Whereas this has been the inevitable goal of his mission willingly and uncompromisingly pursued in obedience to the Father from the beginning, now in the impenetrable darkness of the garden the coherence, the mutual entailment, of on the one hand what he must endure and on the other the salvation of the world is eclipsed. He is about to permit himself to be handed over to sinners, and thereby to so profound a solidarity with the world’s No that, even in prayerful anticipation, the equation – identification with the world’s No enacts his Yes to the Father’s will – is beyond him, beyond his human capacity to comprehend, let alone to achieve. Another way must therefore be found. Hence the prayer that he be relieved of the cup, which otherwise will render him once and for all the epitome of humanity’s godless No, as such the

"clash or incompatibility of wills" because "the very fact that by certain acts of his human will Christ desired something at variance with his divine will, had its origin in this same divine will" (18.6ad1).

Christ’s existential experience of this variance between the instinctual (impulsive) shrinking of the natural inclinations of body and soul from suffering and death and the via crucis that he must follow in order to accomplish God’s good purpose for the world, is evident above all in Gethsemane. By acts of will modified by judgement, "Christ always willed the same object as God" (18.5). But in his sensuous will, "in his rational will acting by natural instinct", he "could will something other than what God willed" (18.5). Indeed, even the divine will is not attracted to pain, suffering, and death "for what they are in themselves", but wills that Christ should undergo them "only as a means for bringing about man’s salvation" (18.5). Christ’s prayer in Gethsemane, Not my will, but your will, be done, bears out the conclusion that "[Christ’s] will modified by judgment desired that God’s will should be fulfilled, even though he admits that he desires something else with another of his wills" (18.5).

His enacting the saving purpose of the divine will in terms of his human nature included his naturally (impulsively) shrinking from death in himself, in his human body and soul. And this was no momentary experience. As the Gethsemane prayer testifies, it entered into the exercising of his rational will so that, in choosing the terrible means to the fulfilment of God’s saving purpose for the world, with anguish but deliberately, freely, he did not choose to follow the conflicting desires of his flesh (cf., 21.4ad1&4).
cause of God’s offended love, and therefore the object of his punishing wrath – the God-
forsaken and rejected.

It is the terrible coincidence of three realities that do not properly belong together that Barth identifies as the contents of the cup that gives Jesus pause. First, there is the lining up of Satan and a rebel world, the same world with and for the sake of which Jesus remains in strictest solidarity, but which, in the deceit, betrayal, and violence of friend and foe alike, has become the pseudonymous means whereby the tempter will achieve his triumph. Then, there is the frightful loneliness of Jesus, epitomised in the sleep of the disciples, not sharing (as he had asked them to) but contributing to the burden of the world’s indifference and hostility that he must bear. His agony is further increased by the awful silence that greets his prayer, not mitigated by the consolation of the angel which precedes the account of the agônia and bloody sweat. The only answer is the stern prospect of the ordeal that so oppresses him. If Satan’s assault and the malice of the world are exactly coincident, now both are exactly coincident with the word and will of God. The face of God and the face of the enemy are indistinguishable. This perverse coincidence must not be permitted finally to overwhelm him. Jesus has pursued his course, refusing every temptation not to continue the world’s representative penitent, for the sake of the glory and cause of God which is the liberation of the world from its satanic bondage. Surely God can neither will nor allow that he should be finally defeated by the diabolically choreographed rage of a rebel world.

Like Meyendorff, both Balthasar and Barth insist that Jesus’ anguished hesitation and plea in face of what is to come are consistent with his uninterrupted obedience unto death. It is not that Jesus, for one moment, sets himself in opposition to his Father’s will. Rather, the dreadful prospect of what is to come is beyond his human capacity to square with the Father’s salutary purpose for the world. That he nevertheless finally consents to drink the cup renders his obedience at once the more mysterious and the more wonderful, as he continues to refuse the temptation to self-deception and self-justification, giving up on neither his total solidarity with a hostile
world nor his total surrender to the justice of God who will be in the right even against himself.  

I am inclined not to prefer one or another of these three descriptions but to think that together they provide a rich, varied, and comprehensive approach to the heart of the matter. An approach which however may be further enhanced by rendering the more explicit the place of Israel in Jesus’ prayerful deliberation. The ingredients of the cup as we have just seen are defined in terms of Jesus and the world. But in the Gospels, as I have tried to show, it is the imminent judgment of Israel at the hands of Israel’s God and Father that is the all-consuming preoccupation of Israel’s messiah, Jesus – throughout his ministry and with the greater urgency here in the garden.

A matter of days before, Jesus has through lamentable tears pronounced Jerusalem’s doom in imagery derived from comparable prophetic denunciations in face of the Babylonian onslaught centuries before (Lk 19.41-44). The holocaust that is about to fall upon them is due quite precisely to their refusal to recognise in Jesus God’s visitation of peace. There remains to them therefore only a fearful prospect of judgment – God’s visitation for peace and salvation become by virtue of their rejection of Jesus a visitation of judgment. Jesus’ tears are occasioned by his own inward identification with his people. As one of them, their doom is his. But more than

858 Balthasar’s and Barth’s readings may be compared with Calvin’s: “It was not simple horror of death, the passing away from the world, but the sight of the dread tribunal of God that came to Him, the judge Himself armed with vengeance beyond understanding. Our sins, whose burden was laid on Him, weighed on Him with their vast mass. No wonder if death’s fearful abyss tormented Him grievously, with fear and anguish…. Death in itself would not have so agonised the Spirit of God’s Son unless He realised that He had to deal with the judgment of God” (Calvin, Gospels 3, 148, 149; cf., John Calvin, The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews and The First and Second Epistles of St Peter, trans. William B. Johnston, eds. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance [Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1963], 65 [hereafter, Calvin, Hebrews]).


that, he is the cause of their doom: “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin” (John 15.22). And, are his tears not also due to his awareness that while their rejection of him is due in part at least to their own perversity (“you did not recognise the time of your visitation”), it is also apparently the effect of diabolical interference (“it is hid from your eyes”) (Lk 19.44, 42)?

Lamentation before his people’s doom returns in Gethsemane with heightened intensity in Jesus’ wretched plea for the cup’s withdrawal. And again, it is not his individual fate that wrings forth his cry, but that of the elect, apart from whom he will neither be, nor be known: his humanity theirs and theirs his, they in him and he in them – unconfusedly but inextricably bound together. But their union is asymmetrical: constituted and maintained one-sidedly (in face of the active hostility, indifference, or feeble discipleship of Israel) by the irrevocable gift and call of the electing God, as also by the correspondently human solidarity according to the flesh and dedicated willingness of Jesus.

861 “He is not concerned with the fate that awaits him there, but with the fate of the city itself” (Fitzmyer, Luke, 1256). Cf., the tears of Elisha in anticipation of Israel’s cruel fate at the hands of Hazael (2 Kgs 8.11); also, Jer 8.22-9.1; Lam 3.48-51; Neh 1.4ff.

862 It is plainest here in John. But compare Jesus’ provocative explanation for his teaching in parables that immediately precedes his interpretation of the parable of the sower (Lk 8.10 and parallels). Jesus’ quotation of Isaiah (in Matthew’s and Mark’s versions of the explanation) reminds us that here too, in his rendering his people guilty by drawing near to them, he resembles the great prophets of old (e.g., esp., Isaiah 6.10).

863 Or, is it the Father who has hidden it from them (cf., Mt 11.25)?

864 Cf., Rom 1.3.

865 E.g., “… but I have prayed for you …” (Lk 22.32).
It is that comprehensive solidarity that is in evidence, albeit implicitly, in Gethsemane, and more particularly in the cup request. One theme that emerged in our earlier survey of those who stood in the breach on Israel’s behalf was the servants’ ambiguous, mediatorial identity, the fluidity of the prophetic ‘I’. Anticipated in Moses’ refusal even to countenance the Lord’s beginning anew with him and his seed at rebel Israel’s expense (Ex 32.10f, 32), it was seen to be especially in evidence in Jeremiah and Second Isaiah, where on occasion the prophet’s or servant’s individual identity and Israel’s corporate identity are indistinguishable.866

In line with what is an admittedly minority report from the Church’s tradition Jesus’ mediatorial, intercessory identity may be discerned in the words, “take this cup from me”, the ‘me’ representative of Yahweh’s elect. “Jesus begs the cup to be removed from Him, not indeed from fear of suffering, but from His compassion for the first people, lest they should have to drink the cup first drunk by Him. Therefore He says expressly, not, Remove from Me the cup, but this cup, that is, the cup of the Jewish people, who can have no excuse for their ignorance in slaying Me, having the Law and the Prophets daily prophesying of Me”.867 In what they are about to do to him, Israel will set at risk as never before their continuing identity as the elect of God. The repulsive contents of the cup are at once the extremist instance of the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of Israel and Yahweh’s inconceivable decision to foreclose on their continuing existence as his own, all of this in the betrayal and execution of Jesus. As the gardener pleaded for another year in which he might avert the owner’s removal of the barren tree, so Jesus appeals to the Father for another way that will not precipitate

866 The same fluidity of personal and corporate identity may be observed in Lamentations, with similarly illuminating connections to Gethsemane.

867 The venerable Bede, as recorded by Thomas Aquinas in *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the Four Gospels, collected out of the works of the Fathers by St. Thomas Aquinas, vol. 3, pt. 2, St Luke, 2nd ed.*, (Oxford and London: John Henry and James Parker; and F. and J. Rivington, 1865), 722 (hereafter, Aquinas, *Catena*). Cf., “[commenting on, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death (Mk 14:34)] But some have understood this, as if He had said, I am sorrowful, not because I am to die, but because the Jews, my countrymen, are about to crucify me, and by these means to be shut out from the kingdom of God” (Theophilact, as quoted by Aquinas, *Catena, vol. 2, St Mark*). Bede and Theophylact find a resonant echo in George Caird’s eloquent comments on Gethsemane (Caird, *Luke, 242-3*).
the traitor’s kiss, the threefold cock’s crow of accusation, the grim consummation of priestly and pharisaic conspiracy, Jerusalem’s committal of her crowning iniquity. Bound by ties of kinship, loyalty, and love, Jesus faces rejection by his own people, from whom even in the profoundest depths of their sin he neither can nor will dissociate himself. Their shame and guilt and the threat of their (and his) Father’s just and terrible curse descend upon him as an impenetrable darkness, blotting out the light of the Father’s salutary will and purpose.

In similar circumstances Moses had appealed to Yahweh to spare his people or else, “blot me out of the book that you have written” (Ex 32.32; cf., Num 11.15). Constrained to issue unrelieved and dreadful denunciations and warnings against his own people (e.g., Jer 15.1-9), Jeremiah had been on more than one occasion reduced to anguish and bewilderment so profound as to evacuate him of all confidence and hope in the covenant faithfulness of the Lord: “Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail” (Jer 15.18; cf., 15.10; 20.7, 14ff). Isaiah’s suffering servant had been portrayed as going to his death so overwhelmed by the darkness which encompassed him that the salutary purpose of his mission (the will of the Lord concerning him) was obscured not only from those who beheld his humiliation but from himself (Is 53.3, 7-9, 11). So it appears to have been for Jesus in the garden. The dreadfulness of the doom that must fall upon Israel by virtue of their unwillingness to be gathered by him “as a hen gathers her brood under her wings” – that they should be forsaken by their covenant Lord (Lk 13.34, 35a) – has constrained him to step into the breach on their behalf, representatively to plead for his, because in him their, relief. It is beyond even Jesus to reconcile this cup of the Father’s wrath, on the one hand, and, on the other, the fulfilment of the mission which is his from this same Father, “to succour his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his seed for ever” (Lk 2.54f).
“Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done” (Lk 22.42).

We turn now to the last and most provocative part of Jesus’ prayer, provocative because it seems to imply that at least temporarily Jesus’ will was at odds with the Father’s. I will not again rehearse in detail Meyendorff’s and Barth’s convincing arguments against such a contradiction.\footnote{Also Balthasar’s, though, as we observed, in carefully qualified fashion – divine and human agency dis-integrating in face of the Father’s final rejection of the “God-hostile flesh” that Jesus has made his own (\textit{TL} 2, 326; cf., \textit{Mysterium} 52, 112), something to which I shall return.} Suffice it to say that Jesus’ request to be relieved of drinking the cup was conditional; conditional upon its being in accord with the Father’s good purpose, so that far from even momentarily setting himself over against the Father, the prayer from beginning to end represents Jesus’ unbroken determination to do nothing but what the Father wills: the conditional request of the first part of the prayer serving but to confirm the freedom with which humanly he renews his uncompromising submission to the Father.\footnote{Cf., Meyendorff, “Christ’s Humanity”, 30; Balthasar, \textit{TD} 4, 364; \textit{TL} 2, 69f; \textit{Credo} 52; Barth, \textit{CD} 4/1, 166, 264.}

With respect to Israel’s future as the Lord’s covenant people, and in light of what we have learned of those who at critical moments in Israel’s history have stood in the breach between Yahweh’s wrath and the people’s disobedience, it seems unlikely that Jesus’ “not … but …”, his refusal to assert his own will independently of the Father’s, should be taken to imply that he is any the more able to see how his drinking the cup will accomplish the goal of his mission to redeem Israel, let alone that he is willing to countenance the outcome of his life as entailing the Father’s irreversibly revoking his covenant with Israel. \textit{That Israel is about to transgress that covenant more profoundly than ever before, so as utterly to deserve to be forever forsaken by its Lord, is beyond dispute, Jesus himself having repeatedly warned them against it. Equally and as ever, life and death belong to the Lord; he will be and do what he will be and do, reserving to himself unconditionally his sovereign and free prerogative to}\hfill

save or to condemn. Yet too, he has hearkened to the voice of those who have interceded with him, even on occasion changing his mind in response to their pleas, whilst also owning that they have dared to approach him only because he himself first drew them to him.

All of this, as a son of Israel, Jesus knows. And he knows that the servants of Yahweh – Moses, Elijah, Job, Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah’s suffering servant – have entered seasons of the most profound despair, in themselves passing beyond the capacity to see their way through the darkness that encompasses them, and yet beyond hope have, as if raised from the dead, been rediscovered by the grace of God.870

Here in the garden, the dreadful contents of the proffered cup threaten to poison and overthrow Jesus’ very raison d’être, the redemption of Israel. The new covenant promised by Jeremiah, of which earlier in the evening Jesus had spoken as sealed by his imminent death, is in the profoundest jeopardy. As if containing within himself all those who have stood in the breach before him, Jesus will not draw back from what awaits him.871 Standing surety for, and refusing to break solidarity with, his own people, Yahweh’s elect, even though they be set upon his destruction, and equally refusing to break solidarity with Yahweh himself, the just Lord and Father of the covenant, he will hand himself over to be betrayed into the hands of sinners that the will of the Father may be done. We may then say with Balthasar872 and Barth873 that

870 “His [Yahweh’s] action may frustrate human expectations; but men are ready to adapt themselves, and to accept without murmuring even the puzzling destiny which causes an innocent man, perhaps one of the great in Israel, to die the death of the wicked. The combination of a living sense of God’s majesty with confidence in his covenant promise leads men to deliver themselves into his hands, and to leave the decision to him” (Eichrodt, Old Testament Theology 2, 476).

871 It will be evident by now that I do not agree with Balthasar when he writes (as noted earlier) that Jesus’ Yes to the Father’s will “is content and form, excluding every other perspective”; “every ... schematism dissolves”, even that of the Old Testament “suffering righteous man” (Balthasar, Mysterium, 105, 106). I have argued in this chapter that it is precisely and uniquely the Old Testament series of those who have stood in the breach in face of Yahweh’s wrath (which I take to be roughly equivalent to Balthasar’s Old Testament suffering righteous man) that is gathered up and consummated in Jesus.

872 E.g., "Insofar as Jesus does not know (and does not wish to know) the paths God sets before him for the fulfilment of his mission, but has the certainty that the Father will bring it to its conclusion, we can apply to him the definition of faith (Heb 11:1)" (TD 3. 171). We recall too that even as Balthasar
Jesus maintains his dual solidarity with rebel Israel and Israel’s (and his) Father in faith, on trust, hoping against hope, and convinced of things not seen.\textsuperscript{874}

Interim Conclusion

The bulk of this chapter has been taken up with demonstrating the second part of my thesis statement, namely, the indispensability of the Jewishness of Jesus to a sufficient reading of the Gethsemane texts. That demonstration was undertaken for the sake of the first part of my thesis statement, which affirms the capacity of classical christologies emphasises the darkness and anguish that beset Jesus from the Garden to his death and descent into hell, he is careful to insist upon the mysterious “hidden freedom” of his “total obedience to the Father” that remains his throughout the ordeal (\textit{TD} 4, 364).

\textsuperscript{873} Barth discerns in Jesus’ assent in the Garden a note of triumph, a “radiant Yes to the actual will of God” that has nothing of resignation about it but is altogether “a great and irresistible advance” (\textit{CD} 4/1, 270f). In his reading of Gethsemane, Barth does not speak of Jesus’ faith or trust, but of his surrender to, affirmation and obedience of, the Father’s will. Nonetheless, he is not averse to speaking of it in other places: “The fact that I live in the faith of the Son of God, in my faith in Him, has its basis in the fact that He Himself, the Son of God, first believed for me, and so believed that all that remains for me to do is to let my eyes rest on Him, which really means to let my eyes follow Him” (\textit{CD} 2/2 559). “In [Jesus Christ] man keeps and maintains the same faithfulness to God that God had never ceased to maintain and keep to him” (\textit{CD} 4/1, 89).

Meyendorff, on the other hand, never so far as I can determine refers to Jesus’ faith or trust, nor does he in different terms describe what I mean here. He prefers to speak of Jesus’ human cooperation with, obedience of, orientation to, and participation in, God.

Calvin unashamedly ascribes faith and trust to Christ: “... we must know that the trial arising from the feeling of pain and fear was not contrary to faith .... For feeling himself [in Gethsemane], as it were, forsaken by God, he did not waver in the least from trust in his goodness” (John Calvin, \textit{Institutes of the Christian Religion}, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975], 519); also, commenting on Mt 26.39 and parallels: “If anyone object that the fear I speak of comes from lack of faith, there is a ready answer. When Christ was struck with the horror of the divine curse His fleshly sense was affected while His faith remained undamaged and unshaken” (Calvin, \textit{Gospels} 3, 152).

\textsuperscript{874} For a brief exposition of the Johanine parallel to Gethsemane (Jn 12.27-32), see Appendix 3.
in contemporary guise to offer a sufficient account of the humanity of Christ. The explication of the second part of my thesis statement in this chapter serves the first, specifically, by taking with the greatest seriousness Meyendorff’s caution against platonizing abstractions of human nature in favour of an account of Jesus’ humanity that is concrete, historical, and individual; Balthasar’s conviction that a sufficiently concrete delineation of Jesus’ distinctively human agency is a task that remains with the church to this day as unfinished business; and Barth’s insistence that it is not the *vere homo* and *vere deus* that define Jesus but he who defines them in his temporal history from Bethlehem to Golgotha, more particularly, in the “one thing” apart from which everything else lacks its proper “contour and colour, definiteness and necessity” (*CD* 4/1, 166), as the Word who became a Jew, this particular Jew, this son of Abraham, David and Mary.

The will of the Father is the triune will of God. Jesus of Nazareth enacts the one will and purpose of God, which is his as it is the Father’s and the Spirit’s, in the totality of human intentions, decisions, and actions that constitute his unsubstitutably human life from womb to tomb and beyond. It belongs to the will and purpose of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that the Son should, in the whole course of his incarnate existence, enact his identity humanly, the divine will mediated to him by the Spirit as the will of the Father. Or to say the same thing differently, the eternal relation of the Son to the Father finds its correspondingly human mode in Jesus’ step-by-step obedience of the Father unto death. I have endeavoured to render this the more concretely by describing that correspondingly human mode, that humanly enacted identity, of the incarnate Son in terms of the Jewishness of Jesus understood not as subsequent to, but as essentially constitutive, determinative, of his humanity. The *vere homo* of the incarnate Son (and therefore also his *vere deus*) is insufficiently concrete to the extent that it is treated apart from his being essentially and non-negotiably of the seed of Abraham, a Jew, and as such the covenant partner of Yahweh, the God of Israel.
Conclusion

Meyendorff, Balthasar, and Barth all identify several challenges that face the Church as she undertakes to provide a dogmatic account of the agency of Jesus Christ in terms of her confession of him as *vere deus* and *vere homo*. Each challenge addresses a different aspect of the Church’s threefold affirmation of the unity of Christ’s person and the fullness of his divine and human agencies.

With respect to the integrity of Christ’s divine agency, if it is the second Person of the Godhead and not the divine nature that became incarnate, how is it that God is not set at one remove from the life and passion, the enacted identity, of Jesus Christ? How is the Son’s kenosis, *exinanitio*, not a leaving behind or setting aside, but the fullest expression, of his divine will and activity for the sake of his uncompromisingly human existence?

The task in regard to a robust affirmation of his human agency may be more precisely defined in terms of Jesus’ relation to the supratemporal triune decision to send the Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Is the man Jesus merely the temporal manifestation of an alien divine decision made prior to his existence, which he can only subsequently ratify? Or, is he humanly free to make his own decisions even in regard to the salvation of the world, so that indeed salvation depends upon his decisions?

Finally, the unity of Christ’s person must be accounted for in light of the apparently dichotomous affirmations of his freedom and obedience, action and passion, autonomy and theonomy, exaltation and humiliation. How is one to reconcile without compromise the divine (infinite) and human (finite) freedom of the one personal subject that is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God? How is it that Christ’s exercise of
his divine agency and human agency is not mutually exclusive but complementary and in most perfect unity? How is the humiliation of the Son of God, above all in his passion and death, not at odds, essentially, with his royal freedom and activity as the exalted Son of Man? How can the event that is Jesus Christ be one-sidedly and comprehensively God’s will and deed, the movement of God to man, and at the same time include the willingly cooperative activity of the human creature as covenant partner, the movement of man to God?

The Integrity of Christ’s Divine Agency

With respect to the dogmatic integrity of Jesus Christ’s deity, and more specifically, divine agency, three matters call for particular attention: the differentiated unity of the triune will; the trinitarian inversion entailed by the incarnation; and the salutary power of Christ’s human work.

The will of God is one. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are possessed equally of the one and only sovereign freedom of God and exercise it in pursuit of their common purpose and goal, the salvation of the world. Yet, each is possessed of and exercises it within the trinitarian logic of the ordo processionis. The Father sends the Son; the Son is willing to be sent. The single divine will encompasses both the Father’s sending and the Son’s being sent. It is the Son’s eternal readiness, receptivity, and appropriate responsiveness to the Father’s initiative and command that, essentially constitutive of his identity as the Son of God, enables him to become human, without compromise to his deity but on the contrary in perfect correspondence to it. His incarnate life and activity manifests his divine life as the eternal Son in human mode. It is his peculiarly differentiated exercise of the sovereign freedom of God, possessed by him in common with the Father and the Spirit, that renders him uniquely fitted to become flesh.

Incarnate, the eternal Son unites in himself divine and human natures without confusion, without compromise to either. His divine and human agencies are consistent, correspondent, but they are not the same. I shall return to this when I come
to the second and third challenges relating to the unity of Christ’s person. Here my focus is on the difference defined in terms of the trinitarian inversion. The incarnate Son relates differently to the divine will. Or, to say the same thing in another way, the Son exercises the divine will in the economy differently from (though not inconsistently with) his exercise of it eternally. The triune decision to save the world not by divine fiat but humanly, from within, requires that the immediacy of the eternal relations should be transposed into a mediated mode. The Son surrenders his immediate exercise with the Father and the Spirit of the infinite freedom of the triune will in order to take upon himself and live within the restraints of finite human freedom. The sovereign will of God, his with the Father and the Spirit, is mediated to him throughout his incarnate career by the Spirit as peculiarly the will of the Father. His faith and prayer give existential expression to this transposed mediacy of relation. His willingness so to surrender himself constitutes the condescension of his exinanitio, the kenosis entailed by his becoming incarnate. That this is a transposition of his divine mode of activity into a human mode, and not a displacement or abnegation of his deity, is due to the essential correspondence between to the two modes as described in the previous paragraph.

That the incarnation does not set God at one remove from the life and activity of Jesus follows from the recognition that humanity, even the humanity of Jesus, is powerless to save. It is not the case that in becoming human Jesus recovered the imago dei so as to be able, as an autonomous human agent, to cooperate with the divine agency of God the Father for the salvation of the world. So to describe it renders God’s saving deed in Christ a matter not only of two wills but of two agents. It also overlooks the evangelical fact that Jesus took to himself not idealised, but fallen, humanity – “made sin” and “a curse for us” (2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13). In Gethsemane, in the cry of desolation, and above all in death itself, the disparity between the Father’s demand and Jesus’ incapacity to fulfil it in the flesh becomes increasingly evident. Not two agents in mutual cooperation, but one and the same agent, the God-man, Jesus Christ, possessed of and exercising divine and human agencies, accomplishes in himself the world’s reconciliation with God. Only because God is not at one remove from, but directly and immediately engaged in and responsible for the evangelical history of Jesus Christ, is that history salutary.
The Integrity of Christ’s Human Agency

We come now to the second challenge and the authenticity of Christ's human agency. Balthasar asks how it is that, when God comes on stage, there can be space for any other actors. In regard to the affirmation of Christ’s two wills, the challenge is to account for the real human freedom of the incarnate Son in light of God’s original and sovereign determination to save the world in just this way. Is the life of Jesus little more than a going through the motions, the temporal manifestation of the eternally real and already given? Or does the salvation of the world depend upon the whole course of his life from Bethlehem to Golgotha as decisively determinative and constitutive of that salvation? Again, I will not rehearse everything that has already been said about this in previous chapters, but only recall certain outstanding features: the decisive and definitive significance of Jesus’ life history, and the asymmetrical complementarity, the differentiated unity, of the two wills.

The *vere deus* and *vere homo* are without content apart from the temporal history of Jesus Christ from Bethlehem to Golgotha which defines these concepts. That is especially so when it comes to the divine decree of the triune God to save the world in Jesus Christ. There are not two levels of decision-making, an eternal, intratrinitarian ‘before’ and a temporal ‘after’, in the life of Jesus. Rather, there is one decision taken by the Son in different modes. The person of the Son of God is from all eternity possessed of and defined by his mission. Equally, the Father’s commission is forever identified with the Son’s willingness to be sent. Neither the Son’s *persona* nor the Father’s command possesses discrete status apart from or prior to the Son’s determination to be the one sent by the Father. Moreover, it is the incarnate existence of Jesus Christ that reveals him to be both subject and object of the divine decree, electing God and elect humanity. He is in himself and at once the Lord of the covenant and the Lord’s elect and human covenant partner, enacting through the whole course of his life the faithfulness of God and humanity’s faithful response.
Jesus’ agency, willingness, freedom is at once divine and human – at once, but not identically. Their coincidence in him is a differentiated unity. Divine and human agencies operate differently. The will of the triune God and as such the (divine) will of the incarnate Son determines the entire career of his temporal history, but not as a series of distinct decisions corresponding to each of his human actions. God’s freedom is precisely his decision to accomplish his purpose humanly, according to the dynamic peculiar to human obedience, in struggle and efforts of will, in multiple and successive human decisions for covenant faithfulness in face of myriad, diverse, and increasingly acute temptations to turn back. Divine and human agencies are related asymmetrically in Jesus, in so far as it is the activity of God that initiates and sustains his distinctively human faithfulness. But, far from threatening the integrity of his humanity, that asymmetry accounts for the consistency with which he humanly resists the fallen inclinations of his assumed nature, in favour of the mission that is his from the Father. The consummate human freedom of his incarnate existence is the fruit of the asymmetrical and differentiated union of deity and humanity in his person.

The Unity of Christ’s Person

The third challenge addresses the apparently unassailable dichotomy between the two wills, agencies, freedoms within the person of Jesus Christ. What are the dogmatic affirmations that account for the integrity of their non-competitive, complementary union? Much of the formal groundwork has already been laid in response to the first two challenges. Without pretending to the comprehensive treatment of this theme in previous chapters, I shall again restrict myself to a summary description of certain outstanding features: specifically, the continuity between the processio and missio of the Son of God; the correspondence between the divine and human modes of the Son’s obedience to the Father; and the concrete determination of the admirabile commercium that constitutes the missio and therefore the persona of the incarnate Son.
The eternal processio and the economic missio of the Son are properly distinguishable – unconfused and undivided. Nonetheless, the Son may properly be said to have been possessed of his mission from all eternity. There is no more original description of him than that he is the one sent by the Father for the salvation of the world. Eternally begotten of the Father, he receives his personhood with and as his mission, so that his mission constitutes his personal identity. He has never existed apart from his mission. Indeed, with the Father and the Spirit he is originally and spontaneously, in and of himself, dedicated to the reconciliation of the world. He does not come by his mission subsequently, by persuasion, let alone by imposition.

That is why obedience may properly be ascribed not only to his human but also to his divine will. The two modes of obedience are distinguishable in terms of what was said above about the trinitarian inversion and the transposition from immediate to mediate relationship of the Father and the Son entailed by the incarnation. Distinguishable, but correspondent and continuous: the eternal and spontaneous readiness of the Son to be sent by the Father is in the economy the series of diverse decisions to resist the myriad temptations to go his own way in favour of consistent obedience to the Father’s command as mediated by the Spirit, “not my own will but the will of him who sent me” (John 5.30; 6.38).

If there has been a single guiding principle that has informed this whole thesis, it is that the vere deus and vere homo are answerable to the evangelical history and not vice versa. That means that the hypostatic union of the two natures and their corresponding agencies must not be allowed to become idealised abstractions. They are sufficiently dogmatic descriptions of Jesus Christ in so far as they comprehend the concrete particulars of holy scripture and the gospel history to which it testifies. The primary task of this thesis has been to demonstrate that the hypostatic union of God and humanity in Jesus Christ is neither more nor less than the salutary union of Israel and of Israel’s God in the person of Israel’s Messiah unto the blessing of the nations.

The hypostatic union is sui generis. But, so is the Gospel history of the concrete particularities of the redemption of Israel to which it gives formal or conceptual expression. That history does not represent a model, or paradigm, or instance, or example, or manifestation of a more comprehensive, universal, generic, reiterable,
reality. *The glory of Israel is the light of the nations* not because it illuminates something that is already there, but on the contrary, because it bestows something altogether new and unfamiliar, even alien and contradictory.

What is that? It is the sovereign mercy of God, or better, the God whose property is always to have mercy, who in Jesus Christ accomplishes once and for all the *admirabile commercium*. The exchange comprehends in him the two extremes of the righteousness, the covenant faithfulness, of the God of Israel on the one hand and the unrighteousness, the absolute covenant betrayal, of rebel Israel on the other. The wonder of the exchange is the new covenant in his blood, the redemption of faithless Israel to the glory of God and the blessing of the nations.

In very brief (at much greater length in previous chapters), the exchange has a history. That history is the narrative and enacted identity of Jesus Christ to which the canonical Gospels testify. Jesus’ day, from virgin conception to resurrection, is Israel’s day – the last, the great and terrible day, the consummate day of the judgment of the elect by the Lord of the elect. It is the decisive day by virtue of the personal identity of Jesus Christ. He is Israel’s long-promised Messiah, the royal priest who combines in himself the roles (identical with his person) of the divine and human partners to the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenant. As the Lord of the covenant he keeps faith with rebel Israel, refusing not to be in the closest solidarity with them even as they pursue their course of covenant betrayal to and beyond the point of no return into the fire of the Lord’s righteous wrath. As the human covenant partner (born of the seed of Abraham) he keeps faith with the Lord by standing surety for Israel, stepping into the breach on their behalf, interceding for them in prayer, in the whole course of his life and in his death bearing and bearing away in himself the Lord’s just judgment. The faithfulness of the Lord of the covenant, the irrevocability of his covenant bond with his chosen people, Israel, even in face of their extremist unfaithfulness, is no ideal or abstraction, but is identical with, consummately revealed and enacted precisely in, the temporal history of Jesus Christ, in the dual solidarity which he keeps with Israel and with the

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875 Romans 11.29.
Father even unto death. In him, the God of Israel is merciful in judgment and just in mercy, and his elect people is his faithful covenant partner unto the blessing of the nations. He is the fulfilment of the covenant on both sides in his own person and activity.

The concilliar definitions of the hypostatic union of two natures and wills in Jesus Christ are conceptual descriptions of that peculiar history. Neo-classical christologies are competent sufficiently to comprehend the divine and human agencies of Christ in so far as they are answerable to and in turn descriptive of the contours of the biblical witness to the history of Yahweh’s faithfulness to Israel for the sake of Israel’s faithfulness to him in Christ, “... thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2.30-32 KJV).

*The Feast of St Mary Magdalene, 2012*
Appendix 1

Balthasar’s account of the *Mater Dolorosa*:
Christ's female counterpart

In the body of this thesis, in Chapter 2, I scrutinised Balthasar's texts for what turned out to be his robust account of the distinctively human agency of Jesus as God’s faithful covenant partner, the incarnate Son of God enacting and redeeming finite freedom. Balthasar insists however that there remains an incompleteness to it, necessarily so, on account of the irreducibly dual character of human existence as originally male and female.

As God, Jesus Christ is complete, possessing all fullness in himself, lacking in nothing. But, he is also human and a man. As such, he is incomplete apart from "the woman who is essential to man’s completeness".876 Out of his divine fullness he, the Son of God, fashions a vessel into which he pours his fullness, "fulfilling both it and – in a certain sense – himself through the realization of its possibilities".877 That vessel is not his humanity, but Mary "drawn ... from the side of the sleeping Saviour (on the Cross)".878

876 *TD* 3, 288-9.

877 *TD* 3, 288.

878 *TD* 3, 289.
She is essential to Jesus' completeness because hers is the creature's freedom, which cannot be violated or overridden by the reconciling deed of God that is exclusively his initiative. Mary's "adequate and genuinely unlimited" cooperative consent is a necessary prerequisite for the incarnation and all its consequences.\textsuperscript{879} Albeit, it is the grace of the crucified that makes her consent possible. "Here we have a circle – in which the effect is the cause of the cause".\textsuperscript{880}

Mary's freedom is the central mystery that emerges from a study of the Marian mysteries of the Gospels. Her freedom is unique, in relation to all other human beings, but also and specifically to Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{881} Unique, by virtue of its exuberance which marks her out as the prototype who fulfills everything Balthasar has said (in \textit{TD} 2) about the relationship between finite and infinite freedom. Handing herself over and entrusting herself to the gracious God, she brings finite freedom to perfection once for all.\textsuperscript{882}

What particularly distinguishes her freedom from that of her son is her having laid hold of her mission "in the midst of time", whereas his freedom "from time immemorial is one with his mission".\textsuperscript{883} It is in Mary that all that was promised in

\textsuperscript{879} \textit{TD} 3, 297. Balthasar is careful in his use of the term, necessary (and synonyms). "Christ, as a \textit{human being}, needs the feminine complement just as much as the first man did .... The essential difference is that, as the \textit{Son of God}, Christ is far above all necessity .... The Woman (the 'Immaculata' of Ephesians 5.27) ... is not so much a gift to him in his need as the product of his own fullness" (ibid., 338).

\textsuperscript{880} \textit{TD} 3, 297; cf., \textit{TL} 2, 360.

\textsuperscript{881} \textit{TL} 2, 360.

\textsuperscript{882} \textit{TD} 3, 299.

\textsuperscript{883} \textit{TD} 3, 300.
God's plans for Israel is fulfilled. Her mission is therefore incomparably unrestricted and universal because she "gives the Yes that God looks for, the Yes to his all-embracing plan".\textsuperscript{884} Her free consent was an integral part of God's saving purpose right from the start.

That partnership is original and integral to christological grace and must not be annulled or overridden. The unique, particular, and essential freedom of Mary's person is the prototype of the freedom, the person, of the church, and must not be "underplay[ed] ... by reducing it simply to the Person of Christ".\textsuperscript{885} Jesus, as the Son of God and in his divine mission, represents all of humanity in a real substitution that reconciles the whole world to God – "in principle".\textsuperscript{886} Essential to its actualization is the cooperative consent of Christ's "complement and partner, endowed with her own freedom".\textsuperscript{887}

It is Mary then, and not Jesus, who is the prototypical human covenant partner fulfilling and transcending Israel's destiny and epitomising the believer's Spirit-impelled response, "the full, Marian Yes".\textsuperscript{888} Not Jesus, though it is the grace of the crucified that calls forth Mary's immaculate consent, as it is her consent upon which the

\textsuperscript{884} TD 3, 300.

\textsuperscript{885} TD 3, 342. Balthasar has specially in mind here a line of thinking, traceable from Augustine through Thomas to Cajetan's "counterblast to Luther's theology of justification", in which "Christ is ... the Church's final suppositum or hypostasis .... Taken to its logical conclusion, the idea leads either to a pure anhypostasis of the Church (Karl Barth) or to the identification of the Christian as such with Christ" (ibid., 343). He is equally suspicious of the opposite extreme according to which the Church either "possesses an eternal being, mostly thought of as feminine, in partnership with Christ", or is given its "subsistence", its "personality", by the Holy Spirit (ibid., 344, 345).

\textsuperscript{886} TD 3, 341-2; cf., TD 4, 259-60.

\textsuperscript{887} TD 3, 342.

\textsuperscript{888} TD 3, 357, cf., 328-34; TL 2, 360-1; Mysterium 133.
possibility of the fullness of the grace of the Cross depends.\textsuperscript{889} This is the full force of the bridal image of the Church. With Mary ("... around its center which is the mission of Mary"), the Church brings Christ into the world in the shape of its members.\textsuperscript{890}

\textsuperscript{889} \textit{TD} 3, 352; \textit{TL} 2, 360.

\textsuperscript{890} \textit{TD} 3, 353. Balthasar is alert to the provocative nature of his remarks. In a footnote, he observes that his assertions, especially regarding the Marian center of the church and the priority of Mary's consent, are rejected by Heribert Mühlen whom he quotes as follows: "We would prefer to speak of the Spirit of Christ himself as the personal center, the abiding origin of everything in the Church (including Mary's 'We' [Wir-Akt])" (ibid., 352 n. 49). In a tantalizingly brief riposte to Mühlen (offered "without wishing to carp at the positive element in what Mühlen has to say"), Balthasar seems to take back much of what he has said, or at least to temper its controversial character. He insists that Mary's priority and the church's centeredness around Mary must be understood in terms of his crucial distinction between 'person' and 'created conscious subject' (I have explained this earlier in this paper). The person of Mary and the church, indeed of all participants in the theodrama, is identical with the mission imparted to them in Christ by the Spirit and accepted by them. That mission (and therefore their personal identity) is "rooted in the person's having been 'chosen – by grace – before the foundation of the world', that is, it is part of the Trinity's plan for the world and for redemption" (ibid., 353 n. 49). Balthasar's insistence upon the Marian center of the church must then be read in light of his prior and primary affirmation, namely that the center and primacy in all things including the church belong to God.
Appendix 2

Translations of Maximus’ Opuscula 6  
and  
Selections from Maximus’ Disputation with Pyrrhus

Opuscula 6891

[On the prayer, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me" (Mt 26:39)]

[1] I. A)892 [An ambiguous passage of Gregory of Nazianzus] Since this, Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me, has the appearance (emphasin) of a refusal (sustoles), you assume it comes, "not from the human being (apo tou anthrôpou) that we know (nooumenou) to be our Saviour – His will (to thelein) is not in the least degree opposed (hupenantion) to God, being fully divine (theôthen) – but from a human being


892 Numbers in square brackets [] correspond to Congourdeau’s. Other numbers and letters are Piret’s. Italicized sentences in square brackets [] are headings inserted into the text by Congourdeau. Biblical references are as inserted into the text by Congourdeau, except for the reference to Phil 2:8 near the end of the text which is referenced by Maximus, himself.
like us possessed of a merely human will that does not always (ou pantôs) follow God, but often resists and struggles [against Him]", according to the words of the Theologian, Gregory.\textsuperscript{893}

B) What is your opinion on the rest of the prayer (to hexês tês eukhês), namely, \textit{yet not as I will, but as you will (to sou thelêma) be done} [Mt 26:39; Mk 14:36; Lk 22:42]? Does it come from rejection or willingness? Perfect harmony or discord (diastaseôs)? It comes from neither resistance (antiptôseôs) nor fear (deilias), but rather a perfect accord (sumphuías) and consent (sunneuseôs). No sensible person could disagree.

[2] C) And if ['the rest of the prayer'] expresses perfect accord and consent, from whom do you think it derives: from a human being like us, or from the one we know (nooumenou) to be our Saviour? If from a human being like us, then the word of the teacher\textsuperscript{894} is wrong, who says on this matter: "a merely human will does not always follow God, but often resists and struggles [against Him]". For if it follows, it does not resist; and if it resists, it does not follow. The two propositions are mutually exclusive and each contradicts the other (thaterô gar thateron hôs antikheimenon anaireitai kai upexistatai).

[3] \textit{The prayer of Christ expresses his human will, according to his divine will} If on the contrary, you think that the prayer, \textit{yet not as I will but as you will be done} [cf., Mk 14:36; Lk 22:42], comes, not from a human being like us, but from the man that we know to be the Saviour, then by the same token you confess a perfect consent of the human will to the divine and paternal will (tên akrên tou anthrôpikou pros ton theion autou thelêma kai patrikon homologêseas sunneusin). Thus you establish the two wills (thelêmata) of the one who has two natures, the two wills and their two activities (energeiaî) conforming to their respective natures, so that there is no opposition


\textsuperscript{894} Maximus means Gregory of Nazianzus.
(enantiōsin) between the two, although we maintain throughout (en pasi) the difference between the natures 'from which, in which, and which, he is by nature'.

[4] II. A) [Response to an objection: the prayer of Christ cannot come from his divine will] But if, constrained by these arguments, you conclude by way of negation (arnētikōs) that not what I will comes neither from a human being like us, nor from the man we know to be the Saviour, but from the unoriginate (anarkhon) deity of the Only-begotten, having excluded his willing something (ti thelein) on his own (idiōs) alongside of the Father (para ton patera), you necessarily relate what was willed (to thelêthen), the refusal of the cup, to the unoriginate deity itself.

[5] B) For, though you insist on denying (tên arnēsin) that he has a will of his own (ti thelein idiōs), you do not eliminate what was willed. For it is impossible for the denial to apply to both: you cannot deny that the Only-begotten wills something on his own alongside of the Father, and also deny what was willed (the refusal of the cup). Otherwise, the affirmation of the common will (tou koinou thelêmatos) of the Father and the Son would entail the elimination of what God willed, our salvation. For our salvation is what God wills by nature (Touto gar autō phusei kathestêke thelêton).

[6] If it is impossible for both to be denied at once, it follows that in opting to deny the Son's willing on his own (ti thelein idiōs) [alongside of the Father] in order to affirm the common will [of the Father, Son (and Spirit)], you do not thereby eliminate what was

895 This last is Maximus' so-called 'formula of the natures'.

896 “If Christ had only a divine will, the object willed ('my will') – namely, the refusal of the cup – is willed by the deity” (Congourdeau, Maxime, 63 n. 67). Cf., "In insisting on denying 'the fact that the Son wills something on his own alongside of the Father', one does not eliminate 'what is willed', but makes it the object of the divine will. One must then say that it is the divine will which refutes the cup, which is absurd" (François Marie Léthel, Théologie de l'Agonie du Christ: La liberté humaine du Fils de Dieu et son importance sotériologique mises en lumière par saint Maxime le Confesseur, Beauchesne, "Theologie Historique" 52 [Beauchesne: Paris, 1979], 95).

897 This assumes with Léthel and Piret that the Greek should read thêsis and not thelêsis as in PG.
willed, namely, the refusal of the cup, but you refer it to the common and unoriginate deity, to which, by way of negation, you have referred the will (to thelein).

[7] C) [The only possible reading of this prayer lies in an accord between the human will and the divine will of Christ] But, if even to think this is hateful, then the negation, not what I will, which excludes all opposition [of the two wills], must entail the affirmation of complete accord between the humanity [human will] of the Saviour and his divine and paternal will (ton theion autou thelêma kai patrikon), from the moment that the Word assumed (ousiôthentos) human nature completely,898 and in assuming it (tê ousiôsei) divinised (theôsantos) it.899

[8] Thus, having, for us, become like us, he said humanly (anthrôpoprepôs) to God his Father, nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done [Lk 22:42], having himself, who is God by nature, as human also a will (thelêsìn) whereby he accomplished the paternal will (thelêma).900

[9] D) That is why, according to the two natures from which, in which, and which was the hypostasis, he showed himself to be the one who by nature willed and enacted (thelêtikos kai energêtikos) our salvation,901 which on the one hand he judged good conjointly (suneudokôn) with the Father and the Spirit, and for which, on the other hand, he became obedient to the Father unto death even death upon the cross (Phil

898 “That is, with its own (idiôs) will. Throughout his career, one never looses the sense that Maximus placed himself on the metaphysical and ontological plane, and not on the psychological” (Congourdeau, Maxime, 64 n. 69).

899 “Maximus affirms therefore that the refusal of the cup, immediately followed by its acceptance – since it is the same formula by which Christ refuses and accepts, and since in a sense it follows right away as the refusal of the refusal of the cup, yet not [refusal of what follows] my will [refusal of the cup] – is an act of the human will of Christ. It is not therefore only as the divine Word that Christ wills our salvation, but also as a human being, with his human will” (Congourdeau, Maxime, 64 n. 70).

900 Piret discusses Maximus' use of the term 'paternal' (Piret, Maxime, 257).

901 “He has willed and enacted our salvation according to his two natures (as God and as human): an affirmation of the two wills and two operations of Christ” (Congourdeau, Maxime, 64 n. 71).
2:8), and thus achieved himself (autourgêsas), by means of his flesh,\textsuperscript{902} the great work (to mega) of the economy.

[10] [Scholium (or Commentary)]\textsuperscript{903} Those who maintain that not my will is related by way of negation to the divine will of the Only-begotten Son, wishing thereby to signify, as they say, that [the Son] could not will something alongside of the Father, – they necessarily refer what is willed (the refusal of the cup) to the unoriginate deity. But then, since it is impossible to deny both the existence of the Son's own will, and what is willed, they deny only the Son's having his own will, and not what is willed, namely the refusal of the cup and therefore of our salvation. Can there be anything more absurd? That would be to say that God chooses to disregard what he wills by nature. In actual fact, the one who says, not what I will [Mk 14:35] is the same one who says, let this cup pass from me [Mt 26:39].

Maximus’ Disputation with Pyrrhus\textsuperscript{904}

\textit{Paragraph 1 [PG 91:297A-C]}

A) (Pyrrhus) What do you mean? Was it as directed by the Logos united to it, that his flesh was moved?

\textsuperscript{902} Congourdeau adds "[of his incarnation]" (Congourdeau, Maxime, 64).

\textsuperscript{903} Congourdeau notes that whereas this is included with the text of Opuscula 6 in PG, "it is probably not by Maximus, but by a later commentator. It serves as a paraphrase of the preceding text" (Congourdeau, Maxime, 64 n. 72). Piret does not include this scholium in his translation of Opuscula 6.

\textsuperscript{904} This is my own translation of selections of the Disputation from the Greek text (PG 91:297A-300A). The headings and numbering are the same as Piret’s in his French translation of these same selections (Piret, Maxime, 274, 275, 277, 278).
(Maximus) You divide the Christ by speaking this way. It was indeed upon the Word's command that both Moses and David were moved, along with those who made way for the divine activity by setting aside their human and carnal properties.

As for us, following the holy Fathers in this as in everything, we say precisely that the God of the universe, who without change became human, not only willed the same as God, according (katallêlôs) to his deity, but also willed the same humanly, according to his humanity [PG 91:297A-B].

B) Since, the beings begotten of 'non-being' (ex ouk onton ta onta genomena) have the power to attach themselves to 'being' and not to 'non-being' (kai tou ontos ou tou me ontos ek housi ten anthektikên dunamin), and since this power is integral to their nature as their tendency (hormê) towards whatever conserves [their 'being'] and as their repulsion (aphormê) from whatever threatens it, the Logos who is above 'being', having become human 'being', had also the power of attaching himself to the 'being' of his humanity.

He has demonstrated, in will and activity, both this inclination and this repulsion: the inclination, naturally and irreproachably, to the point of not being considered God by the incredulous; the repulsion, during the passion, when he willingly recoiled (sustolên) in the face of death.

Who accuses the Church of God of impropriety when it persists in confessing in him, in his human and created (ktistês) nature, the logoi that he himself put within it by creation (demiourgikôs), and without which it would not be nature? (PG 91:297B-C)

Paragraph 2 [PG 91:297C-300A]

A) (Pyrrhus:) If dread [of death] is natural to us and is reprehensible, then according to you what is reprehensible, namely sin, is ours by nature.
(Maximus:) Once again, you are confused by like-sounding words, reasoning falsely within yourself and not according to the truth. There are in fact both a natural fear (kata phusin) and an unnatural fear (para phusin). Natural fear is the power of attaching oneself to 'being' in the mode of repulsion; unnatural fear is irrational (para logos).

What is unnatural because against reason (logismôn), the Lord could on no account admit. But what is natural, because indicative of the inclination towards 'being' (tou einai) secretly (antipoiètikês) present in nature, he exercised on our behalf because he is good (PG 91:297C-D).

B) For, the Lord's will was not driven by his natural impulses and desires as ours is. But, just as he really hungered and thirsted, though his hunger and thirst were not indicative of a tropos like ours (kath' hêmas) but of a tropos above ours (huper hêmas) because he was willingly hungry and thirsty; so also, he was truly filled with dread, though not as we are but in a higher mode, because willingly.

Indeed, generally speaking, all that was natural in Christ was exercised conjointly according to its natural logos and according to the tropos above nature, so that [his human nature] was conformed to its logos and to the economy through the tropos (PG 91:297D-300A).
Appendix 3

Light from John’s Gospel

Jesus maintains his dual solidarity with rebel Israel and Israel’s (and his) Father in faith, on trust, hoping against hope, and convinced of things not seen. That is the testimony of the Johanine parallel to Gethsemane (Jn 12.27-32).\(^{905}\) Having considered and rejected an appeal to the Father to save him from the ordeal that awaits him,\(^{906}\) Jesus reiterates his uncompromising submission to the Father’s will (Jn 12.27f). He does so, though, in such a way as to indicate that there is not the remotest possibility that the Father’s purpose could be other than salutary. In proceeding to the cross, Jesus undertakes what has been laid upon him by the Father. The mission which from the beginning has been his by the Father’s command has always entailed the hour and manner of his death (cf., Jn 12. 23f. 33). Thereby alone will the Father’s name be glorified (Jn 12.28); thereby alone will Jesus “draw all people [or, things] to himself” (Jn 12.32). So it is that Jesus refuses to pray to be saved from death and, setting his

\(^{905}\) I use the term, parallel’, without wishing to imply that I have taken sides in the debate over the exact nature of the connection between the Gethsemane incident in the Synoptics and this moment in John.

\(^{906}\) Not without something of the anguish portrayed by the Synoptists: nun ἡ ψυχή μου τεταρακταί (Jn 12.27). “The obedience of Jesus … unto death is not easy and passionless obedience to the will of God (16.1, 2)” (Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, 2nd ed. rev., ed. Francis Noel Davey [London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1947], 424 [hereafter, Hoskyns, Fourth Gospel]). “No less than in the Synoptics, the Johanine Jesus is fearful in the face of the awful struggle with Satan (v 31) that the hour of his passion and death entails” (Raymond E. Brown, S.S., The Gospel according to John (i-xii), 2nd ed. [New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966], 475 [hereafter, Brown, John]). For the view that John here discounts and corrects the synoptic records of Christ’s agony in Gethsemane, see Loisy, Bauer, and Holtzmann as quoted by Hoskyns, Fourth Gospel, 426.
face steadfastly towards the cross, prays instead, “Father, glorify your name” (Jn 12.28).907

In our earlier survey of Old Testament texts we heard repeatedly Israel’s servants make their appeal to Yahweh to have mercy on Israel because, by virtue of his covenant with them, he has inextricably joined his reputation in the world to the fate of his elect. As Israel flourishes, so the glory of Israel’s God is enhanced; as Israel declines, so the name of Israel’s God is brought into disrepute.908 In the case of Second Isaiah’s suffering servant the equation was complicated as Yahweh accomplished his good purpose and maintained his glory obscurely and paradoxically by bringing his servant into a season of severest torment. It is surely in the same spirit that Jesus prays that his submission to the way of the cross would redound to his Father’s glory.909

Upon receiving heavenly assurance that the Father has heard his prayer (Jn 12.28),910 Jesus immediately announces the defeat of the one who holds the world in thrall and, in the event of his crucifixion, the accomplishment of his own

907 “The surrender of the Son of God is based upon the clear recognition that the hour of His death is imposed upon Him by divine necessity and that precisely in His obedience the purpose of His coming into the world is fulfilled...” (Hoskyns, Fourth Gospel, 425). Though it is not said here, elsewhere in John Jesus makes it plain that as the Father will be glorified in his death, so also he will be glorified by the Father (Jn 13.31f; 17.4). The Father’s glory and the salvation of the world are the blessed outcome of his mission from which he will not be excluded.

908 “For with Israel’s misfortune dishonour falls on God’s name, and with her destruction Yahweh’s name, too, would be exterminated from the world. Thus men can pray God to give his own name the honour which is its due before the whole world by pardoning and succouring Israel” (Eichrodt, Old Testament Theology 2, 477).

909 “In the thought of the author of the Fourth Gospel the death of Jesus has therefore no magical setting. Its efficacy depends upon His obedience to the will of God wrought out in flesh and blood ...” (Hoskyns, Fourth Gospel, 426). Something which we have endeavoured to show is equally true of Luke, and by implication, all of the canonical Gospels; though, as I have also argued, the efficacy of Jesus’ death depends upon his obedience wrought out precisely in Jewish flesh and blood.

910 “There is a ... very tenuous comparison possible between the voice from the sky that some people think is an angel (Jn 12.29) and the angel in the garden mentioned in some manuscripts of Luke (22.43)” (Brown, John, 471).
comprehensive and vicarious victory: the world is delivered from Satan’s tyranny, and his own just and winsome reign is established.\(^{911}\)

No such confident acclamation of the imminent fulfilment of the Father’s favourable purpose towards his elect finds its place in the Synoptics’ Gethsemane narratives. Nonetheless, on the assumption (by no means universally accepted) that we may look to John to illuminate rather than to revise or contradict the other canonical Gospels,\(^{912}\) there is support here for my earlier assertion that the last phrase of Jesus’ prayer in the garden, “your will be done”, is expressive not of a fatalistic resignation to the Father’s will \textit{whatever it may be}, but of his faith-full conviction that the issue of his plumbing the abyss that yawns before him will be the renewal and not the revocation of Yahweh’s covenant with his people.\(^{913}\) In other words, as heir to and fulfilment of the line of those who have stood in the breach in face of the Lord’s wrath against his people, Jesus hopes against hope and is convinced of things not seen.

\(^{911}\) “In the light of the victory of Jesus over the disobedience of the world enslaved in the power of the Devil (14.30; 16.11), the world itself is set under the judgement of God (3.18, 19; 5.22, 24, 30; 16.8-11)” (Hoskyns, \textit{Fourth Gospel}, 425). Cf., “The word \textit{judgment} is taken as ‘reformation’ by some and ‘condemnation’ by others. I agree rather with the former, who expound it that the world must be restored to due order …. Now we know that outside Christ there is nothing but confusion in the world” (John Calvin, \textit{The Gospel according to St John 11-21} and \textit{The First Epistle of John}, trans. T. H. L. Parker [Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1961], 42).


\(^{913}\) Bernard has identified a possible connection between Jesus’ declaration that as the crucified one he will “\textit{draw [heikusô]} all men to myself” (Jn 12.32; cf., Jesus’ earlier reference to the Father as the one who “draws” \textit{[heikusêi]} people to him [Jn 6.44]) and Jer 31.3 which in the Septuagint reads, “The Lord appeared to him [Israel] from afar, saying, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore have I drawn \textit{[heikusa]} you in compassion” (LXX Jeremiah 38.3). If the connection is real, it implicitly sets the lifting up of Jesus and the drawing of all to himself in John 12 within the context of Yahweh’s promise of a new and everlasting covenant with Israel in Jeremiah 31, the “new covenant in my blood” of which Jesus speaks explicitly in the Synoptists’ account of the Passover meal that immediately precedes his agony in the garden (Lk 22.20 and parallels, also 1 Cor 11.25) (J. H. Bernard, \textit{The Gospel according to St John}, vol. 1, ed. A. H. McNeile [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928], 204).
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