

# ***THE FAILURE OF CLASSICAL THEISM DEMONSTRATED IN A NOTEWORTHY CHRISTOLOGICAL PUZZLE***

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*This paper draws on Thomas Kuhn's concept of 'paradigm shift' to highlight the breakdown in the paradigm of classical theism and the (re)emergence of an alternative - relational theism. The failure to solve a noteworthy puzzle within the two-natures Christology serves as a case study for the problem at the heart of classical theism. Richard Swinburne's theory of the 'two-minds' of Christ is considered and shown to be inconsistent because it operates out of the classical paradigm in which a distinction is drawn between God and the world, and by implication, the divine and human in Christ, such that the true humanity of Christ is obscured. We can expect that at a time of epistemological crisis alternative paradigms will vie for the allegiance of the theological community. Indeed the (re)emergence of relational theism should come as no surprise and the competition between the competing paradigms should be welcomed.*

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## **Introduction**

Relational theism presents as an alternative to the classical theological paradigm that in my view has irremediably broken down. Indeed it is the ongoing failure of the classical paradigm that I wish to draw attention to in this paper. By pressing home the cumulative failures of the 'normal' paradigm I hope to provide good reasons why theologians should take seriously the alternative relational paradigm. Of course the importance of such justification cannot be overstated given the weight of evidence that would be required for a paradigm shift in theology to occur.<sup>1</sup>

In this paper I use the term 'relational theism' rather than 'open' or 'process theism' when referring to the alternative and competing theological paradigm. I could just as easily have used the term 'panentheism' to identify that family of views that share common

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<sup>1</sup> I am using the term 'paradigm shift' here in the Kuhnian sense of a wholesale epistemological conversion. Since Kuhn coined the phrase, 'paradigm shift' has come to be identified with more minor epistemic shifts.

roots in Plato and Plotinus and, according to John Cooper, can quite accurately be referred to as ‘the other God of the Philosophers.’<sup>2</sup> Relational theism (or panentheism) is therefore the broader category that includes process and open views. Cooper distinguishes the two theologies in the following way:

In brief, panentheism affirms that although God and the world are ontologically distinct and God transcends the world, the world is “in” God ontologically. In contrast, classical theism posits an unqualified distinction between God and the world: although intimately related, God and creatures are always and entirely other than one another.<sup>3</sup>

In his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn identifies the conditions leading to a scientific paradigm shift. Firstly, there is a breakdown in the “normal” paradigm. Secondly, an alternative paradigm presents itself for consideration.<sup>4</sup> Thirdly there is competition between paradigms for the allegiance of the scientific community. According to Kuhn,

...paradigm testing occurs only after persistent failure to solve a noteworthy puzzle has given rise to crisis. And even then it occurs only after the sense of crisis has evoked an alternative candidate for paradigm. In the sciences the testing situation never consists, as puzzle-solving does, simply in the comparison of a single paradigm with nature. Instead, testing occurs as part of the competition between two rival paradigms for the allegiance of the scientific community.<sup>5</sup>

I accept that what Kuhn claims for science and the scientific community is readily applicable to theology and the theological community.

The purpose of this paper is not to present a history or an explication of the relational paradigm. Nor is it the purpose to

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<sup>2</sup> John W. Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2007). Cooper uses the terms ‘Relational Theology’ and ‘Panentheism’ interchangeably.

<sup>3</sup> Cooper, *Panentheism*, 18.

<sup>4</sup> In Kuhn’s reckoning the alternative scientific paradigm historically succeeds the ‘normal’ one because the ‘new’ one is new precisely because it is novel and so explains all that the previous one could not. In theology, however, a competing paradigm may not necessarily be novel in that it may have existed in some form concurrently with the ‘normal’ or traditional theological paradigm. This possibility does not reduce the power of a Kuhnian analysis as applied to theology.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 145.

defend it against its better known competitor. Rather, it is simply to justify its place in the theological landscape as an alternative to the 'normal' paradigm. By highlighting the breakdown in the classical paradigm due to its 'failure to solve a noteworthy puzzle' I hope to show that pursuing an alternative is to be considered a perfectly reasonable option at a time of epistemological crisis.<sup>6</sup>

Let us then consider the breakdown in the 'normal' (classical) paradigm that Kuhn considers a necessary condition for a paradigm shift to occur. I contend that the breakdown is due to the failure of theologians working in the 'normal' paradigm to overcome the dualism at its heart. As I have recently argued, metaphysical dualism is the problem in the classical model that will not go away.<sup>7</sup> The traditional model with its doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* sets God and the world and the divine and human in Christ over against each other to such an extent that it becomes exceedingly difficult to give an adequate explanation of how the two terms in each instance are related.

John Robinson highlighted this same point some forty years ago now when he made the claim that theism is unable to transcend dualism.

It polarizes God and the world as though they existed alongside each other in unresolved juxtaposition. This dualism runs through all the characteristic language of Western theism. It speaks of

God *and* the world  
Heaven *and* earth  
Eternity *and* time  
The infinite *and* the finite  
Transcendence *and* Immanence  
The one *and* the many  
Good *and* evil  
The divine nature *and* the human in Christ  
[and I would add  
Soul *and* body ]<sup>8</sup>

The problematic dualism at the heart of the classical paradigm has resulted in the ongoing failure of those working in the classical

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<sup>6</sup> An epistemological crisis occurs as a result of a breakdown in the normal puzzle solving activity.

<sup>7</sup> Dean Smith, 'Christology in Crisis: An Assessment and Response,' PhD thesis University of Queensland, 2009. <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:203098>

<sup>8</sup> John Robinson, *Exploration into God* (London and Oxford: Mowbrays, 1977), 139.

paradigm adequately to account for genuine human freedom and the substantial reality, and by implication intrinsic value, of the created world. At the macro level these problems are played out in the articulation of the God-world relationship. At the micro level the problems are played out in the articulation of the human-divine relationship in Christ.

Now given the constraints of a single paper it is not possible for me to show by way of a historical survey how the classical paradigm has irremediably broken down.<sup>9</sup> What I will attempt, however, is a much more modest task. By singling out one of the most recent apologies for classical Christological paradigm I will add to the accumulative failures of the classical tradition to address its most 'noteworthy puzzle.' The problems in Christology are not unrelated to the most basic problems in the classical paradigm. Indeed the problems in Christology simply reflect and reinforce the problems at the heart of classical theism. By adding to the weight of evidence for the breakdown in the classical model I hope to show that relational theism as an alternative model of God deserves more careful attention by theologians generally. As stated earlier it is not my intention in this paper to defend relational theism against classical theism, but it certainly is my view that it does provide a robust account both of human freedom and the intrinsic value of the created world, the very issues the classical model founders upon.

### **Swinburne's Attempt to Solve a Noteworthy Puzzle**

The problem for Christology comes down to this – 'How do we adequately explain how a divine person can take on a human way of being in the world without completely overwhelming the humanity of that same person?' This has really been the challenge for Christian theologians for nearly two millennia. When we look carefully we can see that it is the humanity of Jesus that has most often been seen as the casualty in the Chalcedonian creed. How can one truly speak of Jesus having true human freedom when his freedom was not his own but that of the Logos? We are to believe that the human Jesus was like us in every way except that he did not sin only to find that on account of his being in essence the Eternal Logos, the second Person of the Trinity, he could not have possibly sinned.

Swinburne accepts the classical Christian view that in the person of Jesus Christ, the divine became human. He argues that it is

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<sup>9</sup> For such a historical survey refer to Dean Smith, 'Christology in Crisis.'

probable that God chose to share our human nature based upon the fact that humans do not merely suffer but do much wrong.<sup>10</sup> Swinburne then asks the question 'how will a loving God respond to the suffering and wrongdoing of these feeble but partly rational creatures whom he has made?' He goes on to outline his strategy:

I will argue in this chapter that *a priori* we would expect God to respond to our suffering and wrongdoing by himself living a human life. God would live a human life by one divine person becoming human (that is, 'becoming incarnate').<sup>11</sup>

What is of particular interest here is Swinburne's understanding of the nature-person problematic and his understanding of what it means for God to live a human life. He has elsewhere shown himself to be committed to a Cartesian or Platonic view of the human soul. Indeed he believes that possession of the same is the most distinctive human attribute.<sup>12</sup> Yet while Swinburne recognises that it is the soul that individuates us as human persons, given the one person/two natures conclusion of Chalcedon it cannot therefore be the case that Christ had a soul in the ordinary sense. In regards to his understanding of Chalcedon, he maintains that 'the Council could not have meant by this that there were in Christ both a divine and human soul in my sense of "soul".<sup>13</sup> Instead, it must have intended 'human soul' in an Aristotelian sense (body-dependent form), 'as saying that Christ had a human way of thinking...as well as his divine way.'<sup>14</sup>

Like Aquinas before him Swinburne explicates the 'two-natures' hypothesis in terms of 'two-minds.' In many respects his approach is similar to that of Thomas Morris. Like Morris, Swinburne is not interested in any account that would compromise the integrity of the divine nature. In becoming human the divine person does not empty himself as in kenotic accounts. Indeed, 'being essentially divine, he could not cease to be divine.'<sup>15</sup> The Incarnate Christ must therefore remain omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly free, eternal and metaphysically necessary. Yet the Christian claim is that Jesus was

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 39.

<sup>11</sup> Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?*, 39.

<sup>12</sup> David Brown, review of *The Christian God*, by Richard Swinburne, in *Journal of Theological Studies*, 47:1 (1996): 388.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 196.

<sup>14</sup> Swinburne, *The Christian God*, 197.

<sup>15</sup> Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?*, 41.

human as well as divine. Swinburne poses the question: 'how could a divine person acquire this human way of thinking with its accompanying body in addition to but separate from his own essential divine way of thinking?'<sup>16</sup> In answering this question Swinburne draws upon the findings of modern psychology giving weight to his 'two-minds' hypothesis.

As a possible analogy of the human and divine minds in Christ, Swinburne introduces us to Freud's divided mind hypothesis. It was Freud who helped us understand how the same person could have two systems of belief that are in some sense independent. Swinburne presents the following explanation and scenario:

Freud described people who sometimes, when performing some actions, act only on one system of beliefs and are not guided by the beliefs of the other system; and conversely. Although all the beliefs of such a person are accessible to him, he refuses to admit to his consciousness the beliefs of the one system when he is acting in the light of the other system of beliefs. Thus, to take a well-worn example, a mother may refuse to acknowledge to herself a belief that her son is dead or to allow some of her actions to be guided by it. When asked if she believes that he is dead, she says 'No', and this is an honest reply, for it is guided by those beliefs of which she is conscious. Yet other actions of hers may be guided by the belief that her son is dead (even though she does not admit that belief to consciousness); for instance, she may throw away some of his possessions. The refusal to admit a belief to consciousness is of course itself also something that the mother refuses to admit to herself to be happening.<sup>17</sup>

From such an example we can, according to Swinburne, see how a divine person, in becoming incarnate, could allow himself to have a separate set of semi-beliefs. Swinburne explains that these semi-beliefs are caused in him as they are in us, by stimuli interacting with the sense organs. The divine person would then have a set of beliefs belonging to the divine mind as well as a set of semi-beliefs belonging to the human mind. The divine belief system will then include the knowledge that his human system contains the beliefs it does, and it will contain those beliefs in the human system that are true. Here there is the acknowledgement by Swinburne that the human belief system may include false beliefs.

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<sup>16</sup> Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?*, 42.

<sup>17</sup> Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?*, 42.

We thus get a picture of a divine consciousness and a human consciousness of God Incarnate, the divine consciousness including the human consciousness, but the human consciousness not including the divine consciousness.<sup>18</sup>

Swinburne acknowledges the possibility that just as the beliefs of a divided mind might be contradictory, so the beliefs of the human Jesus might contradict the beliefs of the divine Jesus. We can make sense of this, claims Swinburne, if we consider the case of the mother who has the belief that her son is dead and the belief that her son is alive. In this particular case only one of these beliefs forms part of a general view of the world. The other simply guides the subject's actions in certain circumstances.

According to Swinburne the human acts of God Incarnate would be the public acts done through his human body along with the private mental events that correlated with the brain-states of that body. If the claim is that God Incarnate had a body much like ours, then it must be the case, according to Swinburne, that the capacities of the human body of the Incarnate Christ must not be radically different from our own. Because God is unable to divest himself of his essential properties he would not have limited his powers, but instead would have taken on an additional limited way of operating in the world. So, according to Swinburne, 'using the notion of the divided mind, we can coherently suppose a divine person to become incarnate while remaining divine, and yet act and feel much like ourselves.'<sup>19</sup>

Swinburne is keen to highlight the human qualities of God Incarnate. Just as the omnipotent God would have taken on additional limited ways of operating so the wholly free and good God would also acquire human desires. Swinburne argues that desires incline us to perform certain actions and that the desires of the kinds to which humans are subject often incline us to perform actions that are less than the best or even bad. He then reiterates the point that people only have a free choice between what they believe to be the best and bad, or less than the best, if their desire to do less than the best or bad is stronger than their desire to do the best. According to Swinburne, God would have ensured in his human actions that he would not be subject to such stronger desires that would allow the human Jesus to do any wrong action. The human Jesus must then

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<sup>18</sup> Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?*, 43.

<sup>19</sup> Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?*, 44.

have had access to such true moral beliefs as would allow him to be aware of his duties.

Even though God Incarnate could not do wrong, he may, however, though not allowing himself to be aware of his divine beliefs, have been inclined to believe that he might succumb to temptation to do wrong and thus, in the situation of temptation, he could have *felt* as we do.<sup>20</sup>

According to Swinburne, while it is wrong to put oneself in a position where one is liable to do wrong, there is nothing wrong with someone putting oneself in a position where one is liable to choose a less than the best action, or indeed a bad action, so long as the bad action is not a wrong action. We have already been alerted to the fact that Swinburne makes a distinction between a bad action and a wrong action thus allowing for the possibility of Jesus performing a less than the best or even a bad action but not a wrong action. In his definition of freedom Swinburne points out that a perfectly free person unswayed by irrational desires would naturally do what he believed to be the best action if indeed he believed there was a best action. It is just at this point however, that Swinburne inserts a qualification into his definition of freedom to allow for the possibility of God Incarnate being tempted by desires to do less than the best actions just as is the case for other human persons. He goes on to define a perfectly free person as 'one subject to no irrational desires except in so far as, uninfluenced by such desires, he chooses to allow himself to act while being influenced by such desires (though not compelled to yield to them).'<sup>21</sup> With such a qualification it is then possible to imagine that while uninfluenced by any considerations except those of reason, God Incarnate could have chosen at a time to allow himself to perform certain actions that were not the best actions, perhaps even a bad action, while open to the influence of irrational desires. God Incarnate may put himself in the situation of temptation of this kind in order to share our human condition as much as possible.

Now there are a number of problems with Swinburne's account that have a familiar ring to them. What is at stake is Christ's humanity. We are presented again not with one who is like us in every respect, but one who is very different to us in the most fundamental ways. What are we to make of Swinburne's attempts to

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<sup>20</sup> Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?*, 45.

<sup>21</sup> Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?*, 46.



show that the human Jesus was like us? Swinburne claims that God would have ensured in his human actions that he would not be subject to such stronger desires that would allow the human Jesus to do any wrong action. Further, we are to imagine that while uninfluenced by any considerations except those of reason, God Incarnate could have chosen at a time to allow himself to do certain actions that were not the best actions, perhaps even a bad action, while open to the influence of irrational desires. God Incarnate may have put himself in the situation of temptation of this kind in order to share our human condition as much as possible.

In what way though are such limitations on the human Jesus remotely like those on humans in general? Swinburne speaks of Christ in terms of being perfectly free and subject to no irrational desires unless he allows himself to act while being open to such irrational desires. If Swinburne is going to draw on the work of Freud to bolster his case for the 'two-minds' hypothesis, surely he cannot ignore the findings of Freud and other psychologists on the irrational forces brought to bear on human decision making and human behaviour. Humans clearly do not always act according to rational decision-making processes. The alcoholic might acknowledge his addiction prior to taking his next drink, the highly intelligent obsessive-compulsive sufferer may well acknowledge her problem, yet neither is simply free to live their lives uninfluenced by irrational forces. If we then point out that these irrational forces are the result of sin and that Christ is not affected in the way that we are, then what are we to make of the claim that Christ was human like us? It seems rather an empty claim.

I pose the following question to Swinburne. If the claim is made of God Incarnate that he was indeed free yet was not capable of doing wrong, then does it not make sense to suppose that we have here a better model of humanity than the one with which we are all too familiar? If the Incarnation is not limited to one instance, and there is nothing in Swinburne's account that would tell against such a possibility, then does it not seem perfectly reasonable to suppose that on such a view we could imagine a world in which humans could act freely yet not perform wrong actions? With such great evil in the world it would seem that given Swinburne's account, God has overlooked a possible concept of humanity that a philosopher, albeit an eminent one, has been able to develop. That is, unless there is a logical incoherence in 'freedom' and 'always choosing the good.'

Swinburne seems to be caught on the horns of a dilemma. If his account of Christ's freedom can be shown to be an adequate model for the human Jesus this would seem to tell against the goodness of God. If on the other hand the model can be shown to be inadequate then this tells against the humanity of Christ.

According to Tim Bayne, one of the major problems for the inclusion model is that it fails to provide an adequate account of the unity of consciousness.<sup>22</sup>

Swinburne points to a number of empirical parallels to the inclusionist model, but the force of his discussion is blunted by the fact that it is far from clear that the disorders he refers to – repression and self-deception involve parallel streams of consciousness. It is one thing to say that a subject might have two doxastic systems, each of which might inform her behaviour on different occasions, but it is quite another thing to claim that a single subject of experience might, at one and the same time, have two streams of consciousness. Pathologies of repression and self-deception support the former claim, but the inclusionist defends the latter one.<sup>23</sup>

Just how then does Swinburne conceive of the unity of the two streams of consciousness in the person of Christ? Bayne argues that he grounds the unity of Christ in the fact that he has (is) a single divine soul.<sup>24</sup> Yet on the other hand it is substance dualism that, according to Swinburne, can account for the unity of consciousness in Christ. Here is what Swinburne has to say:

My conclusion – that truths about persons are other than truths about their bodies and parts thereof – is, I suggest, forced upon anyone who reflects seriously on the fact of the unity of consciousness over time and at a time. A framework of thought which makes sense of this fact is provided if we think of a person as body plus soul, such that the continuing of the soul alone guarantees the continuing person.<sup>25</sup>

It would appear that the claims of Swinburne are inconsistent. On the one hand it is in virtue of the fact that Christ has (is) a single soul that we can conceive of the unity of Christ. Yet if he has (is) a single soul then it is difficult to account for the two consciousness states

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<sup>22</sup> Tim Bayne, 'The Inclusion Model of the Incarnation: Problems and Prospects,' *Religious Studies* 37 (2001): 125-141.

<sup>23</sup> Tim Bayne, 'The Inclusion Model of the Incarnation: Problems and Prospects,' 128.

<sup>24</sup> Bayne, 'The Inclusion Model of the Incarnation,' 134.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 160.

that are co-subjective.<sup>26</sup> According to Bayne it would seem to be logically impossible for a single subject to have two streams of consciousness, for if this was possible would it not also be possible for these to fuse into one? This is a possibility Swinburne, however, rejects.

If on the other hand, substance dualism is required to account for the unity of consciousness in Christ, how are we to conceive of the unity of consciousness in Christ? Would it not be more logical to suppose that the presence of two streams of consciousness in Christ would commit us to positing two subjects of experience in the one human being?<sup>27</sup> It has been observed that patients whose *corpus callosum* has been severed sometimes behave in ways that would suggest they have two streams of consciousness. But while we may be tempted to take this as evidence for the dual consciousness hypothesis there may be good reasons to infer that we have two distinct subjects. Indeed it is just this conclusion that Swinburne seems to accept as a possibility. He writes:

[I]t is a crucial issue whether by the [commissurotomy] operation we have created two persons. Experimenters seek to discover by the responses in speech, writing or other means whether one subject is co-experiencing the different visual, auditory, olfactory, etc., sensations caused through the sense organs or whether there are two subjects, which have different sensations.<sup>28</sup>

Bayne raises a further objection to the 'two-minds' or 'inclusion' model. The model does seem to be inconsistent with the claim that God is infallible and so threatens the logical coherence of the classical theological system.<sup>29</sup> He presents his argument this way:

- (1) Jesus had false beliefs.
  - (2) All of Christ's beliefs are properly attributable to God.
- Therefore,
- (3) God had false beliefs

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<sup>26</sup> Bayne, 'The Inclusion Model of the Incarnation,' 134.

<sup>27</sup> Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, 23-33.

<sup>28</sup> Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, 158.

<sup>29</sup> Bayne, 'The Inclusion Model of the Incarnation,' 136-137.

Certainly Swinburne acknowledges the possibility of (1).<sup>30</sup> Bayne argues that while Morris and Swinburne might well reject (2) they are indeed committed to (2) in virtue of the fact that they endorse the doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*, the doctrine that both the human and divine attributes are predicable of the same individual. According to Bayne, 'restricting Christ's false beliefs to his human consciousness won't allow one to reject (3) if Christ's human consciousness belongs to Christ. Consciousnesses do not believe things, people do.'<sup>31</sup>

A further question that needs to be addressed in Swinburne's account is this; 'does his view of Christ's soul commit Swinburne to Apollinarianism'? If it does then again the humanity of Christ is threatened. This is just the question considered by David Brown in his review of *The Christian God*. According to the teaching of Apollinarius, Jesus Christ had a human body and a human soul but no human rational mind because the Logos had taken its place. Now according to Brown,

It would seem odd in the extreme for Swinburne to declare that what he regards as the most distinctive human attribute, the possession of a Cartesian soul, was lacking in Christ's case. For, if lacking, can it be 'saved'? Or is it...necessary to 'save' it if everything that matters could have been accomplished by an Aristotelian soul?<sup>32</sup>

Brown rightly adduces that it was precisely because the Council of Chalcedon wanted to show that Christ was human in every respect that it concluded that he had a soul. Yet this is precisely what Swinburne denies. It also becomes harder, according to Brown, to understand Swinburne's use of the divided mind analogy to explain the human limitations of Christ.

For these limitations are now in some sense within the divine soul and while it is relatively easy to comprehend a blocking mechanism between two different entities (divine and human soul) or even within a single finite, fallible entity (the human mind), what are we to make of conflict within a single divine soul?<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?*, 43.

<sup>31</sup> Bayne, 'The Inclusion Model of the Incarnation,' 137.

<sup>32</sup> Brown, review of *The Christian God*, 388.

<sup>33</sup> Brown, review of *The Christian God*, 388.

‘But is this,’ asks Brown, ‘anywhere near sufficient for Christ’s identification with our condition or adequate to explain the extent of his fallibility.’<sup>34</sup> I think not.

## Conclusion

Again we are faced with the problems arising out of a paradigm in which God and the world are ontologically distinct. The intractable problem of accounting for the relationship between God and the world and the divine and human in Christ is but a symptom of the metaphysical dualism at the heart of the classical paradigm. The problem as it relates to Christology then has always been to give an adequate account of the unity of the divine and human natures in Christ. At Chalcedon the unity of the divine and human in Christ was achieved only by eliminating the subject of Christ’s humanity (*anhypostasia*). While a further variation on the theme (*enhypostasia*) was somewhat of an improvement, the casualty in the end has been the humanity of Christ. Aquinas sought to explicate the nature-person schema in terms of a two minds model but in the end delivered a human Jesus that possessed the beatific vision from conception with a very different knowledge structure to our own – in other words no human Jesus at all. Swinburne follows Aquinas in adopting a two minds model but again fails to account for the unity of the divine and human in Christ. As in all the traditional accounts the humanity of Christ is the casualty.

With such a history of failure to solve its most noteworthy puzzle by those embodying the classical paradigm, we should not be surprised that another paradigm presents itself for consideration. According to Kuhn, we can expect that a time of epistemological crisis will evoke an alternative paradigm. Not only should we not be surprised by the increased interest of theologians in relational theism; we should welcome the competition between the two paradigms.

I cannot however end on this note. Even if I have suitably justified the presence of a competitor for the traditional theological paradigm by highlighting the ongoing failures of the same to solve its noteworthy puzzle, what is still to be addressed is whether the alternative paradigm is likely to be any more successful in overcoming these same problems. I would therefore like to offer

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<sup>34</sup> Brown, review of *The Christian God*, 388.

some brief concluding comments as to why I believe the relational paradigm is able to do so.

The classical view with its notion of creation *ex nihilo* presents God and the word in radical juxtaposition, guaranteeing a substantial dualism between God and the world, the divine and human in Christ and the soul and body in the human person. In this model natures are a 'given' and, so, static. Such a model correlates well with a mechanistic world view and might well be referred to as a displacement model because of the tendency for the greater reality to displace the lesser.<sup>35</sup> In Christology, as we have seen, this has led to the displacement of the humanity of Jesus by the divinity of Jesus. Relational theism on the other hand presents the God-world relationship in such intimate terms that the world is thought of as being 'in' God (hence the *en* in panentheism). In this (evolutionary) model natures are not static but dynamic. The Incarnation is not that event which sees the joining of two normally unrelated substances but rather is the beginning and the goal of God's self-communication to the world toward which all things are being drawn. This might be referred to as an organic, self-transcending model because instead of one reality displacing the other there is a transcending of a reality *towards* more reality. In this way, the dynamic process in which the world comes to its self-transcendence in God is properly directed.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> In James D. Straus, *Christ in the Maze of Process Theology: Process Theology's Influence on Post-Modern Christology* [Online. Accessed 25 October 2011]. <http://www.worldvieweyes.org/resources/Strauss/ProcessTheo15.doc>, 5. Straus draws attention to one of John Cobb's favourite phrases: 'Common sense dictates that two objects, like a stone and a table, cannot occupy the same space at the same time.' He then provides a quote from Bruce A. Demarest. 'A fundamental tenet of process theology is that the classical two natures doctrine of Christ presupposes concepts that are out-dated, absurd, and irrelevant to modern minds. It is argued that the substantial 1st model of the relation between God and Jesus must go, for the reason that two entities (such as God and man) cannot occupy the same space at the same time. This being so, process theologians insist that Deity, viewed as a substance, cannot possibly unite with humanity, likewise viewed as a substance, without creating a displacement of one substance by the other.' Bruce A. Demarest, 'Process Theology and the Pauline Doctrine of the Incarnation,' *Pauline Studies*, eds., Donald Hagner and Murray Harris (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 67.

<sup>36</sup> 'The entire dynamism which God has implanted in the process by which the world comes to be in self-transcendence (and this as intrinsic to it but not, however, as a constitutive element of its own essence) is already directed toward this self-communication and its acceptance by the world.' Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1978), 190.