Finding Time for God

An examination of God’s relation to Time through the Metaphysics of the Incarnation

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Submitted in Accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
The University of Leeds
School of Philosophy, Religion, and History of Science
May 2018
The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There’s a lot to be thankful for! I couldn’t have wished for two better supervisors than Mikel Burley and Helen Steward. I could never have produced this thesis without your fantastic support, guidance and encouragement. I’m incredibly grateful for your tireless reading (and re-reading!) of chapter drafts, your insightful comments, and your stimulating conversation.

Thank you to Cambridge University Press and the School of PRHS for funding my PhD research for the first three years of my PhD, particularly Mark Wynn and (from CUP) Sally Hoffman, for continuing the former funding for my fourth year of PhD study. Thank you also to the Yorkshire Ladies Council of Education for providing me with a grant for my fourth year of PhD study. It’s thanks to this financial support that I’ve been able to pursue this research, and I’m extremely grateful for the privilege.

Thank you very much to Anna Marmodoro and Mark Wynn for giving their time to be my examiners. Your work has been a great source of inspiration to me, so it’s an honour that you’re now reading mine.

Thank you also to Mark Wynn – in your capacity as Editor of Religious Studies – for letting me work as your assistant. I’ve learned a great deal from you, and your encouragement and conversation has been invaluable. Thanks very much to Nick Jones for employing me as your assistant for the last two years. Special thanks also to Heather Logue, and (although no longer at Leeds) to Elizabeth Barnes and Jon Robson. Thank you to Matt Boswell, from the School of English, for hiring me as an intern in Johannesburg on your ‘Mobilising Multidirectional Memory’ Project – an experience that I’ll never forget.

Thanks to Lauren Harris Jones, my A-level teacher, for igniting my interest in academic Philosophy. Thank you to Alasdair Richmond, my MSc thesis supervisor, for encouraging me to apply for a PhD, and for your continued support.

I’m very grateful to Sarah Brown and Pete Spence for employing me as your babysitter throughout my PhD, and also for your friendship. Thanks to the best kids I know, Isaac and Elliot Spence-Brown, for four years of fun, football and baking.
I can’t believe how lucky I am to have made such good friends in my fellow PhD students. If I’m grateful for one thing the most from this experience, it’s for meeting you four: Adina Covaci, Gary Mullen, Bryan Ross and Alison Toop. I’m so happy that we’ve all been in this together. A big thank you also to Dani Adams, Sarah Adams, Will Gamester, Pei-Lung Cheng and Andrea White. Special thanks to David Heering for suggesting the title of this thesis.

Thanks to my three oldest friends: Jamie Bartlett, Frank Spooner and Jack Spooner. Thanks also to two of the best friends ever, Sara Baines and Emma Martlew.

I’m very grateful to have such a close and loving family, including two amazing Grandmothers: Sheila and Thelma. I’m so thankful for the love of my mum, Catherine, and the time that we had together. Thanks to Nic and Harriet for all of the family fun and laughter, and invaluable sisterly support. My stepmum, Jan, and dad, Dave, have unwaveringly supported and encouraged me throughout my PhD, and I’m thankful for this now and always. I cherish the times that we spend together, and am thankful for everything that you’ve done for me.

Without my best friend and partner Peter Blockley, I can’t imagine much at all, let alone this thesis. Your love and support, your reassurances, and the fun that we have together, has carried me through this whole experience, and will continue to carry me through the rest of what life brings our way.
ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I use the metaphysics of the incarnation as a lens for investigating how a Christian God relates to time. Parts (i)-(iii) deal in turn with a specific aspect, or element, of the incarnation. Each part examines whether and how a timeless (atemporal) and a temporal God, respectively, can account for that specific incarnational element. These elements are the Son of God ‘becoming’ incarnate; the incarnate Son being fully divine, fully human and a single person; and the Son’s glorification. I argue that a temporal God is compatible with all three of these important aspects of the incarnation. Comparably, if God is atemporal, I argue that although we can potentially make sense of the Son ‘becoming’ incarnate, we cannot account for the other two elements of the incarnation. Part (iv) takes a step back from these incarnational commitments, and considers debates about the nature of time itself: the relationism vs. substantivalism debate, and the tensed vs. tenseless time debate. I argue that in previous debates, substantival time has been assumed almost exclusively, and that construing time as relational instead looks promising for furthering the debate, because it provides us with a new and coherent sense of divine temporality. Regarding the tensed vs. tenseless time debate, I argue that atemporalists tend to assume that time itself is tenseless; and temporalists that it is tensed. I consider how God’s relation to time might look if we swap these traditional pairings around. I argue that a timeless God existing outside of tensed time is wholly untenable, but that a temporal God existing within tenseless time is perfectly coherent. This strengthens my argument in Parts (i)-(iii), because it provides the temporalist alone with the freedom to choose between tensed and tenseless time, whereas atemporalists have only tenseless time to work with.
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ABBREVIATIONS

**B:** The incarnate Son's human body

**B+S:** The incarnate Son's human body and soul/mind (I’m using ‘soul’ and ‘mind’ interchangeably)

**DDA:** Derivative Divine Atemporality

**DDT:** Derivative Divine Temporality

**EMR:** Ersatz Modal Realism

**GMR:** Genuine Modal Realism

**GS:** God the Son

**GS+B+S:** The composite Jesus Christ (as three-parter compositionalists would allege)

**GTR:** General Theory of Relativity

**MST:** Moving Spotlight Theory

**NDA:** Non-derivative Divine Atemporality

**RR-Relationism:** Radically Reductionist Relationism

**S:** The incarnate Son’s human soul (used interchangeably with ‘mind’)

**STR:** Special Theory of Relativity
INTRODUCTION

Still, even as a boy watching the hands creep around the clock, or the digital hundredths of a second blurring on the stopwatch, I was in awe that something was slipping away forever, being replaced by something that had never been before.

I wondered what time would look like to God (DeWeese 2004: ix).

(1) MOTIVATIONS AND METHODOLOGY

If God exists, what is His (or Her, or Its) relation to time? God is frequently hailed as 'eternal', but it’s unclear what’s meant by this. Our understanding of God’s eternity has the potential to be very different, depending not only upon how God relates to time, but also upon how we’re understanding the nature of time itself. What is clear, however, is the significance of asking this question, for it bears importantly on whether and how God exists. Nelson Pike recognises that ‘a good deal rests on how one interprets [the predicate ‘eternal’] when attempting to construct, comprehend or evaluate a theological system’ (1970: x). Here, Pike states the importance of considering God’s relation to time, hinting at how tightly our answer to this question is interwoven with the answers that we would (and could) give to other questions about the nature of God, and the possibility of God’s existence. It’s from this latter angle that I’ve come to be so interested in God’s relation to time. I’m agnostic about God’s existence, but ‘actively’ so: for a long time, I’ve been interested in philosophical arguments both for and against it. In

1 Henceforth, I’ll refer to God using the male pronoun, for ease of consistency with the many quotations that I’ll draw upon in this thesis. However, I (of course) want to remain neutral regarding God’s gender, or lack thereof.
particular, I’m interested in metaphysical arguments for and against God’s existence. Braiding this together with an independent interest in the metaphysics of time, I was led to the wealth of literature on God’s relation to time, and in turn to contemplate the topic of this thesis.

The question of how God relates to time is an age-old one that can be traced back to Augustine (c.397-400 CE) [1912]) and Boethius (c. 524 CE [1969]). Moreover, it’s still being hotly contested to this day, with the likes of Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (1981), together with Brian Leftow (2007) and Ryan Mullins (2016), to name but a few, making important waves in the debate. This thesis approaches this ancient question from a fresh angle: it focuses specifically on how a Christian God relates to time, and uses the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God as a lens for carrying out this investigation. That is, I privilege incarnational commitments as central and non-negotiable, and examine how these affect the debate over God’s relation to time. The reason for this privileging of the incarnation is due to its centrality to the Christian faith. The Son’s becoming human is what made possible the Atonement: the reconciling of humankind with God, repairing the broken relationship that existed beforehand.²

But what of the relationship between the incarnation and divine eternity? The incarnation is in fact bound up in important ways with temporal considerations, and with the ‘eternity’ of God Himself. After all, according to the Christian tradition, Christ incarnate was a walking, talking, temporal being: He was born, He was later baptised, and He lived for 33 years. Millard J. Erickson remarks that the Son incarnate ‘ate, paid taxes, and did all the normal day-to-day activities that humans do’ (1991: 21), thus drawing attention to the temporality of the Son’s incarnate life. Knowing that I’d need to narrow my focus to just one religion, it’s for this reason that I chose to explore the Christian religion specifically in this thesis. The incarnation has particular and blatant links to temporal issues in that Jesus Christ, God incarnate, was evidently a temporal being.

² I’m going to be using the terms ‘The Son’, ‘the Word’ and ‘GS’ (God the Son) interchangeably. They all pick out the second person of the Trinity. Importantly, ‘Jesus Christ’ also (allegedly) picks out this same person, but in human form – although we’ll see that different accounts of the incarnation tell different stories about how this can be the case.
In spite of this, I’m confident that this thesis still bears upon debate that reaches beyond the parameters of the philosophy of Christianity. This is for several reasons. Firstly, incarnation is by no means unique to Christianity, and I think that my general methodology (prioritising incarnational commitments to investigate divine eternity) could equally be utilised in the philosophy of other religions, with the potential to yield further interesting results. Secondly, it will become clear that my final two chapters take something of a step back from the Christian faith. They consider more generally how debates in the metaphysics of time can bear upon the picture of God’s relation to time – where ‘God’ can be understood as (I think) a God of theism in general.

Returning to the Christian incarnation, the topic of this thesis is how this act affects our understanding of divine eternity. My central research question is therefore:

Assuming an orthodox understanding of the doctrine of the incarnation, what does this tell us about God’s relation to time?

This question requires me to specify in more detail what I mean by an ‘orthodox’ understanding of the incarnation, which I’ll do shortly. I’ll also specify the two traditional (and opposed) accounts of God’s relation to time. Furthermore, later in the thesis I’ll consider different ways that we might understand the nature of time itself – and how these differing understandings can be brought to bear upon this central research question.

Taking this research question in its entirety, I’ll privilege the doctrine of the incarnation as non-negotiable, and then consider how, in light of this indispensable commitment, God can be said to relate to time. In so doing, I hope to shed fresh light onto our understanding of the Christian concept of an ‘eternal’ God. A number of other authors hint at the importance of prioritising the incarnation. Richard A. Holland, for instance, urges that ‘the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation should function as the centrepiece in the debate and the lens through which the topic [of God’s relation to time] ought to be examined’ (2012: 58). Similarly, Stephen T. Davies remarks that ‘the doctrine that “God became man in Jesus Christ” is universally recognised by Christians
as being at the heart of their faith. The theological stakes could not be higher’ (1983: 119). More recently, Mullins has remarked that ‘since the incarnation is part of the hardcore of every Christian research program, it is a non-negotiable doctrine’ (2016: 157). Moreover, it’s worth noting that how God relates to time is an issue that’s (as exemplified by this thesis) very much up for debate, whereas the incarnation, and the elements of it that I’m privileging in this thesis, isn’t disputed by Christians.  

This further justifies my use of the incarnation as a constraint in my consideration of how a Christian God relates to time. I’ll now outline the two traditional ways of understanding divine eternity. Both views have plenty of supporters, and the debate between the two positions is very much alive.

The first account of God’s relation to time is that He’s timeless, or atemporal: that He exists ‘outside’ of time and views all events in time as if in one ‘simultaneous present’.  

There are no temporal stages in an atemporal God’s life. Recently, Mullins has provided a clear and comprehensive definition of atemporality: ‘God is timeless if and only if God exists (i) without beginning, (ii) without end, and (iii) without succession. To say that God exists without succession means that God does not do one thing, and then another’ (2016: xvi). God’s atemporality is perhaps most famously expressed by Boethius as ‘the complete, simultaneous and perfect possession of everlasting life’ (1969: 163). An analogy, also tracing back to Boethius (ibid.: 165), is often drawn to standing on a hilltop and surveying the view below all at once: God (although Himself not in time as our hilltop observer would be) perceives the temporal spread all at once, despite us temporal creatures in the valley below experiencing each moment as we come to it. A similar analogy is helpfully drawn to a circle, whose circumference is equally present to the centre point

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3 What is disputed, of course, is the way that the specifics of the incarnation can be metaphysically cashed out. This debate will be extremely important in this thesis, but doesn’t detract from my above assertion that the incarnation itself isn’t questioned by Christians.

4 The word ‘simultaneous’ (or some variant of it) is often used when describing an atemporal God’s perspective on the world. It’s used, for instance, in Boethius’ famous expression of God’s atemporality, which is outlined in the main text below. Similarly, Mullins says that ‘a timeless God does not experience one moment of time after another. Instead, a timeless God experiences His life all at once’ (2016: xvi: my italics). However, it’s important to note that simultaneity is itself a temporal relation, and so not one that can apply to a timeless God. The use of this word in discussion of a timeless God is, then, merely an attempt at describing what time would look like for atemporal God. I’ll follow others in using it, but I do so for want of a better word.
(or God), but for any given point on the circumference, some points are much closer to it than others. Katherin Rogers says that this analogy is ‘especially apt because the centre point is seen not only as present to the circumference, but as its source’ (1994: 5), which is also the case for God, who created humankind. I’ll henceforth refer to proponents of this view of God’s relation to time as ‘atemporalists’.

The rival view is that God is temporal, that He exists ‘within’ time as we do, experiencing each moment as it passes. A God existing in this relation to time is sometimes described as ‘sempiternal’. Unlike us humans, a temporal God would be backwardly and forwardly everlasting, but, as with us, moments of His life can be said to have passed, with other moments still to come. To help us compare God’s temporality with His atemporality, Mullins provides the following conditions which he deems to be a necessary and sufficient guarantee of temporality: ‘God is temporal if and only if God exists (i) without beginning, (ii) without end, and (iii) with succession. The life of a temporal God is characterised by a succession of moments’ (2016: xvi). It’s important to note that only the final attribute has changed here from Mullins’ definition of a timeless God: whether or not God’s life comprises a succession of moments is what distinguishes a temporal God from a timeless one. Henceforth, I’ll refer to proponents of God’s temporality as ‘temporalists’.

Typically, philosophers working within the Christian tradition have argued for one or other of these views and then later, if at all, suggested how their chosen account can be squared with the doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God. However, due to the centrality of this doctrine to the Christian faith, I maintain that we should prioritise the incarnation, and use it as the initial lens for examining the coherence of different accounts of God’s relation to time. More specifically, I’ll prioritise what I consider to be the three most important and indispensable elements of the incarnation, and examine how, or whether, these can cohere with the accounts of God’s eternity. These three elements will be explained in more detail in my thesis outline, but briefly, for now, they’re: i) the Son of God ‘becoming’ incarnate, ii) the incarnate Son being fully divine, fully human and a single person, and iii) the Son’s glorification. I’ll now outline some important constraints that an account of the incarnation must meet.
Before detailing my thesis outline, it’s important to qualify some boundaries: any account of the incarnation must be faithful to orthodoxy (and, as such, mustn’t stray into heresy). This imposition of orthodox boundaries is by no means an outrageous one: it indeed structures the vast bulk of the Christian tradition within which I’m working. In fact, in the literature of the metaphysics of the incarnation, the charging of one’s opponent(s) with straying into unorthodoxy is a common occurrence.

In particular, it’s the Chalcedonian ‘definition’ of the incarnation that I want to remain faithful to. Again, this is a decision that I made because it’s in keeping with the philosophical literature on the incarnation, which takes Chalcedon to be orthodox. Sarah Coakley explains this use of Chalcedon as a ‘guide’ in one’s theorising about the incarnation. She says:

What category or genre of text, then, is the Chalcedonian ‘Definition’? If my interpretation is right, it is clearly regulatory and binding as a ‘pattern’ endorsed by an ecumenical council: reflections on Christ’s person must henceforth pass through this ‘grid’, as I put it (2002: 161-2).

I’ll be taking a similar approach in this thesis: using the Chalcedonian ‘definition’ as a regulatory guide that a satisfactory account of the incarnation must satisfy. Importantly, though, Coakley views Chalcedon simply a linguistic guide to orthodoxy: one that shapes how we’re to talk about the incarnation (ibid.: 144). I, however, will use Chalcedon as a ‘grid’ to consider and shape our ontological claims about the incarnation. I want my metaphysics of the incarnation to be orthodox, because it’s this that I’m employing to examine God’s relation to time.

The Chalcedonian Creed (AD 451) holds, among other things, the following commitments:
i) Before time began he was begotten of the Father, in respect of his deity, and now in these ‘last days,’…this selfsame one was born of Mary the virgin…in respect of his human-ness (John H. Leith (ed.) 1963: 36)

ii) The distinctiveness of each nature is not nullified by the union…they are not divided or cut into two, but are together the one and only and only-begotten Logos of God, the Lord Jesus Christ (ibid.)

iii) [Jesus Christ] ascended to heaven, where He sits at the Father’s right hand (ibid.: 24)

It’s these three commitments that I’m privileging in this thesis. What I take from (i) is that the Son of God was wholly divine ‘before’ the incarnation, but He then ‘became’ incarnate (being born of Mary) as a human being.\(^5\) This is of course important because of, firstly, the sacrifice that the Son made in becoming incarnate – He was once wholly divine, but He (freely) chose to take on human form in addition to this. Clause (ii) details the important commitment that the incarnate Son possessed a fully human and a fully divine nature – and these belonged to Him (a single person). It’s important that the divine Son took on a genuine human nature here, so that His later ascension into Heaven can make it possible for other humans to achieve salvation. It’s also important that He remains divine, otherwise it won’t after all have been the Son of God who became human. Finally, (iii) details the fact that the Son of God rose into Heaven, where He exists (be this atemporally or temporally) to this day. As mentioned, this ‘glorification’ is important because it’s part of the process that created the possibility for the rest of humanity to achieve salvation themselves, thus completing the restoration of the relationship between God and humankind.

There is, however, an important tension that lies between my central research question and the Chalcedonian ‘definition’ of the incarnation. This is, as Leftow puts it, that ‘it is a simple historical fact that those who defined

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\(^5\) This notion of the Son being unincarnate ‘before’ the incarnation doesn’t have to be read in a temporal sense. For instance, when Paul Helm discusses the Son being begotten of the Father ‘before’ all time, this is to be read in a non-temporal sense. He provides the examples of duty being before pleasure and the Queen before the Prime Minister to illustrate this; here we read ‘before’ as denoting a relation of superiority; a sort of non-temporal precedence. Similarly, the Son could exist in an unincarnate state ‘before’ the incarnation ‘in the nature of his being’, because He doesn’t depend upon time and creation for his existence (1994: 323).
orthodox Christian belief about the incarnation universally held that God is non-temporal’ (2002: 273). If the Church Fathers who set out the Chalcedonian definition of the incarnation all agreed that God was timeless, how can I then use the Chalcedonian creed as a guide in a debate that involves calling into question this very divine timelessness? My answer is that Chalcedon is about the incarnation, and it’s these (orthodox) incarnational specifics that I’m holding fixed. This doesn’t mean that I can’t interpret these specifics in different ways – which includes considering interpretations that the church Fathers perhaps wouldn’t have been happy with. The restriction I’m imposing is only that my account of the incarnation must be orthodox, and in line with Chalcedon itself.

In order to remain orthodox in this way, it’s important that I steer clear of common heresies regarding the incarnation. There are three that will be of greatest relevance to this thesis, and I’ll outline them here. The first of these is Nestorian heresy, and it involves claiming that there are in fact two persons in Christ – one of which is human, and the other, divine (Hill 2011: 2). To endorse this view would be to depart from the orthodoxy of Chalcedon, which we’ve seen emphasises the unity of Christ’s divine and human natures into one single person. The second heresy that will be relevant to this thesis is Apollinarianism. This is the heresy that, upon incarnation, the Son of God displaces Christ’s human soul (or mind) (ibid.: 9-10). This would therefore mean that the incarnate Son isn’t sufficiently human, as is required by the Chalcedonian creed. There’s another heresy which seems to me to be a broader species of Apollinarianism: Eutycheanism, according to which ‘Christ’s divinity swamps His humanity’ (ibid.: 2). This would again be unacceptable according to the Chalcedonian definition of the incarnation, which states that ‘the distinctiveness of each nature is not nullified by the union’. More specifically, Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill cite Eutyches as reportedly claiming that: ‘I acknowledge that our Lord came into being from two natures before the union, but after the union I acknowledge one nature’ (2008: 108). This single nature is interpreted as meaning a divine nature, such that the incarnate Christ doesn’t possess a human nature (ibid.).

These three heresies will come to be important when I discuss various metaphysical accounts of the incarnation over the course of this thesis. Having
outlined these heresies, and explained how they diverge from the orthodox Chalcedonian creed that I’m privileging in this thesis, I’ll now proceed to outline the structure of the thesis. In so doing, I’ll also illustrate in more detail the three specific incarnational commitments (derived from Chalcedon) that I’m privileging as sacrosanct in my examination of God’s relation to time.

(3) OUTLINE

My thesis comprises four parts, with two chapters in each. The first three parts each take a specific, indispensable aspect of the incarnation (outlined in the previous section), and devote a two-chapter treatment to it. They examine whether God’s atemporality and temporality, respectively, can make sense of the aspect of the incarnation in question.

By the Son’s ‘becoming’ incarnate, I mean His taking on of human flesh, and living among us as the human Jesus. I’m upholding this incarnational commitment in line with orthodoxy: the Son wasn’t always human, since there was a time ‘before’ the incarnation where He existed unincarnate. This incarnational commitment is important because the Son’s prerogative was to remain unincarnate: He needn’t have become a human, but He did so in order to atone for the sins of humankind. The Son’s giving up of His state of exclusive divinity was therefore a sacrifice that He freely made, and any account of the incarnation must honour this important commitment. The first two chapters of the thesis therefore consider what account atemporalists, and temporalists, respectively, can give of the Son’s becoming incarnate.

Chapter 1 considers what story the atemporalist can tell about this ‘change’ that the Son undergoes when He becomes a human. I consider three types of change in turn, which I take to be exhaustive. I argue firstly that intrinsic change isn’t something that a timeless God can undergo, because it requires God Himself to be one way (unincarnate) at one time, and another way (incarnate) at a later time, which thus introduces sequence into His life. Such sequence isn’t possible for a timeless being, I argue. I then consider two other ways that the atemporalist might be able to claim that the Son changed.

6 I explained above that ‘before’ here can be read in a non-temporal sense, so this use of it doesn’t beg the question against the atemporalist.
when He became incarnate. The first of these stems from a brief remark by Leftow, who says that the Son can take on flesh in virtue of exhibiting modal variation (2002: 299). I attempt to unpack this remark, treating it as amounting to the claim that there’s a type of timeless change made up of variation across possible worlds: in some possible worlds, the Son becomes incarnate, and in others, He doesn’t. Exhibiting such modal variation doesn’t require one to be subject to the passage of time, I suggest, because of all modal facts being fixed in either their truth or their falsity. However, after unpacking this account of modal variation as it might be understood by genuine modal realists, and ersatzists, respectively, I argue that Leftow’s modal claim can’t in fact give us the cross-worldly variation that is desired. Furthermore, I argue that Leftow’s claim undermines the sense in which the incarnation was a free act of grace on God’s part, insofar as we wish to be libertarians about divine freedom. Therefore, Leftow’s ‘modal variation’ claim can’t be appealed to as a means of explaining how the Son of God ‘changed’ upon becoming incarnate.

In considering a final type of change, I return to the idea of change requiring time, but consider the possibility of intrinsic change happening to something else, such that the Son becomes incarnate in virtue of a change merely extrinsic to Himself. I argue that extrinsic change gives us a provisionally viable means of explaining how a timeless God becomes incarnate: the Son Himself changes in virtue of a human body, together with perhaps a human mind or soul, coming into existence and becoming related to Him (despite that He himself undergoes no intrinsic change). This is comparable to my changing to become a sister: I changed from ‘not being a sister’ to ‘being a sister’ when my sister was born, but in order for this to happen I needn’t have changed intrinsically at all. Moreover, to be subject to an extrinsic change means that one needn’t be subject to the passage of time, I argue. I explain that this requires one to subscribe to a specific model of the incarnation — a compositionalist account, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3. According to such accounts, the Son of God (GS) is a part of a divine composite, which has as its other parts a human body (B) — as well as, perhaps — a human soul (S). With (what I think are) all the options for ways that a

7 Henceforth, I use the terms ‘soul’ and ‘mind’ interchangeably, as is common in this debate. I also want to remain neutral regarding what (if anything, in the case of a soul), they refer to.
timeless God can become incarnate on the table and scrutinised, I conclude that atemporalists can, thanks only to an appeal to extrinsic change, make sense of the Son becoming incarnate.

In Chapter 2, I consider how the temporalist can uphold the important incarnational commitment that the Son ‘became’ incarnate. I note firstly that temporalists, unlike their atemporalist rivals, can claim that the Son ‘took on’ flesh by undergoing an intrinsic change – because temporalists are, by definition, perfectly happy with God being subject to the passage of time. I consider two different ways that temporalists might model the Son’s becoming incarnate. Firstly, they might argue that the Word takes on flesh by becoming united with a human body (and perhaps a human soul as well) to form a divine composite that is Jesus Christ. This is a type of ‘compositionalist’ account, which I introduced above. Alternatively, temporalists could adopt a ‘transformationalist’ account, whereby ‘to become human means to be transformed into a human’ (Hill 2011: 8). Hill defines ‘transformed’ here as ‘roughly...a process in which a single subject loses some properties...and acquires new properties’ (ibid.). Importantly, atemporalists don’t have the resources to appeal to transformationalist accounts, because there’s no doubt that these require intrinsic change. I deal briefly with temporalist compositionalist accounts, arguing that they’re as least as viable as their atemporalist counterparts discussed in Chapter 1, and probably more so. The bulk of the chapter is then devoted to examining transformationalist accounts, which I argue are preferable for temporalists.

I consider a challenge to transformationalist accounts, which comes from kind-essentialism, the thesis that: ‘if something is a member of a [natural] kind, then it is essentially a member of that [natural] kind’ (Sharpe 2017: 119). If ‘human’ is a natural kind, and kind-essentialism is true, then it seems impossible for the Son to become human, because it’s impossible for something human to exist without being human. There’s also another commitment which Kevin Sharpe argues is a species of kind-essentialism: ‘For any kind K, there is a set of modal properties, M, such that necessarily, for any x, x is a member of kind K if and only if x has the members of M’ (ibid.). This commitment also

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8 Whatever a human may be. I want to remain neutral between rival accounts of what it is to be a human being.
has the potential to cause problems for the transformationalist if there are modal properties belonging to the kinds ‘divine’ and ‘human’ that are in conflict with one another. This would make it such that nothing can simultaneously be a member of the kinds ‘divine’ and ‘human’, which would of course be highly problematic for the possibility of the incarnation.

I proceed to outline and examine various responses that are available to transformationalists in the face of these objections. I firstly suggest an argument, due to Thomas Morris, that one can draw a distinction between being ‘fully’ and ‘merely’ human (1986: 65). This is fleshed out by Sharpe’s suggestion that, if we revise our traditional understanding of kind-essentialism, we are able to account for the divine becoming human. However, I next argue that Sharpe’s revised kind-essentialism leaves any sense of the Son’s being ‘fully human’ looking rather impoverished. I therefore seek to patch this up. I distinguish between the taking on of an ‘abstract’ and ‘concrete’ human nature, due to Alvin Plantinga (1999: 183). Thanks to this distinction, I argue that we can explain how the Son is ‘truly human’ if we postulate what concrete thing He transforms into in order that He count as a human. As a case study, I discuss physicalism about human persons – in particular, Trenton Merricks’s version of physicalism (2007), which claims that the Son is fully human because He is identical with – and so, transforms into – a human body.

Having examined what atemporalists and temporalists can say about the Son ‘becoming’ human, Part two of my thesis considers the Son’s attributes when He is incarnate. According to orthodoxy, the incarnate Son of God is fully divine and fully human, and yet is one single person. Mullins comments that ‘in the one person Jesus Christ, humanity and divinity are perfectly united. Not only is it possible for divinity and humanity to be united, they are in fact united and the incarnation is a demonstration of that fact’ (2016: 178). It’s been notoriously difficult to formulate a coherent account of how it is that Christ’s divine and human natures (with their vastly different characteristics) can belong to one person in a way that doesn’t entail a contradiction. This has been called the problem of ‘incoherence’ (Hill 2011: 2) – henceforth, the ‘incoherence problem’. For instance, how can the person that is Christ

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9 I also discuss whether or not ‘divine’ can reasonably be thought of as a ‘kind’.
incarnate be both omnipotent and limited in power? I discuss various attempted solutions to this problem in light of God’s relation to time.

Chapter 3 argues that atemporalists can’t provide a satisfactory response to the incoherence problem. I discuss the compositionalist models of the incarnation that Leftow (2002: 273-299) and Stump (2002: 197-218) have employed to answer this challenge. I examine their different uses of reduplication of parts of a composite Christ to resolve contradiction. They propose that we ascribe the opposing properties to two different parts (or natures) of Jesus (divine and human), rather than to the person simpliciter. For instance, Christ would be omnipotent qua divine nature, and limited in power qua human nature.

I examine Leftow and Stump’s ‘reduplication’ arguments as applied to what I consider to be the strongest model of atemporalist compositionalist – the ‘hierarchy of natures’ account, which is due to Marmodoro and Hill (2010: 469). I draw out the problems with the proposed solution of reduplication, arguing that it leads to a dilemma for the atemporalist. On the one hand, it steers one dangerously towards Nestorian heresy (where there are unacceptably two persons in Christ). For example, atemporalists must maintain that GS is a person, and that He’s timelessly incarnate. But we also have B and S, and in the case of the rest of us humans, these elements would compose a person on their own. On top of this, the composite itself (GS+B+S) seems to be another reasonable candidate for personhood – in which case we’d have three persons in Christ. I outline and anticipate atemporalist responses to this charge, arguing that to the extent that they succeed in defending the status of Christ incarnate as a single person, they unacceptably end up denying Him a human mind. This is the other horn of the dilemma, and is also Apollinarian heresy, which therefore leads the atemporalist into unorthodoxy. Furthermore, denying Christ a human mind looks problematic for preserving His human nature, which is of course a crucial element of this part of my thesis. I therefore conclude that atemporalists can’t satisfactorily respond to the incoherence problem.

I’ve mentioned that temporalists have more ways of modelling the incarnation at their disposal: they (unlike atemporalists) can appeal to transformationalist models, whereby the Son undergoes an intrinsic change
when He becomes incarnate. In Chapter 4, I argue that temporalists do have the resources to combat the incoherence problem. I firstly consider a strategy, due to Morris (1986: 103) and Richard Swinburne (1994: 202), called the ‘two minds’ (or ‘divided mind’) model. According to this model, when the Son becomes incarnate the divine mind either voluntarily splits (divided mind), or is joined by a human mind (two minds). We then have a human mind (or stream of consciousness) in Christ, in addition to the divine one. It’s this that enables the Son to be fully human (as well as fully divine), according to two minds theorists. Furthermore, different properties can be attributed to the different minds, such that – allegedly – these properties aren’t in conflict. For example, the divine mind continues to be omniscient and omnipotent, as well as to possess all of the other requisites for divinity. The human mind is fallible and limited in power, and unaware that it’s at all divine. I consider two different ways of interpreting the two minds view. I argue that there are problems with both of these interpretations, such that they’re unable to respond to the incoherence problem.

I next consider an alternative temporalist model: kenoticism – which is a form of transformationalism. According to kenoticism, the Son freely chose to divest Himself of the divine properties of omniscience and omnipotence when He became incarnate, because of His love for humankind and His desire to truly know our condition. The kenoticist argues that the incarnate Son is fully human thanks to His divestiture of omniscience and omnipotence, as well as His possession of a limited human body. Kenoticists allegedly face problems accounting for the Son’s divinity, because He has given up His omniscience and omnipotence, which are commonly thought to be essential divine properties. Furthermore, kenoticists must be able to explain how Christ incarnate counts as one single person. This latter duty remains challenging because there are still other divine properties (omnibenevolence, and necessary existence, for example), which look difficult to reconcile with the Son’s humanity. I argue that kenoticists can respond to these worries, and that they can therefore successfully avoid the incoherence problem. At the close of this part of the thesis, the temporalist is therefore in a stronger position than the atemporalist.
Part three turns to consider the final element of the incarnation that I’m privileging in this thesis: the glorification of the Son of God. After Jesus died on the cross, and was resurrected, He rose into Heaven and was exalted. He remains in this state today, according to the temporalist. Alternatively, for atemporalists, it’s alleged to be timelessly true that the Son is glorified. The Son’s glorification is important because Jesus’ ascension into Heaven is believed to have paved the way for the rest of humanity to achieve salvation for themselves. Chapters 5 and 6 consider how atemporalists and temporalists, respectively, can account for this glorification. Hill (2012) has recently outlined two specific ‘glorification requirements’, and I follow Him in prioritising these as necessary benchmarks that any credible account of the incarnation must be able to meet. These are i) ‘after his death, Jesus both was raised from the dead and subsequently ascended into heaven. After these events, he is exalted—i.e., he enjoys the full divine life and properties, including omniscience and omnipotence’ (2012: 3), and ii) ‘after his exaltation, Jesus remains fully human’ (ibid.: 4).

Chapter 5 firstly explains that atemporalists must understand the above requirements in different language that doesn’t attribute sequence to the life of Jesus. Hill offers just such an ‘atemporalist friendly’ interpretation of the requirements, which I outline. I next argue that atemporalists can successfully meet the requirement that the exalted Son is omniscient and omnipotent. However, I proceed to argue that they’re unable to satisfy the requirement that the Son remains ‘fully human’ when He’s exalted. This is the case even when the commitment is phrased in atemporalist-friendly language, such that ‘it’s true now’ (at this time) that the Son (who exists atemporally) is fully human. I explain that atemporalists must understand this claim as meaning that it’s timelessly true that the Son is human, and argue that atemporalists are unable to provide a satisfactory guarantee of what grounds this timeless truth, without resorting to unacceptably temporal concepts.

Chapter 6 argues that, although two minds accounts of the incarnation aren’t able to meet Hill’s two glorification requirements, kenotic models can do so. I explain that the second requirement seems prima facie to

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10 As opposed to it being true that the Son is human at this time, which is not something that atemporalists can endorse. See Hill 2012: 25 (footnote).
present a challenge to kenoticism. This is that, if (as is thought by kenoticists) the Son must necessarily give up His omniscience and omnipotence in order to become human, then it seems that once He regains these divine attributes, it ought to be impossible for Him to be human. However, Hill’s second requirement states that the exalted Son is ‘fully human’. I suggest three responses available to the kenoticist, endorsing one which qualifies what exactly we mean by ‘human’ in such a way that the exalted Son can be human and omniscient and omnipotent.

In light of the discussion in Parts 1, 2 and 3 of my thesis, privileging incarnational commitments means that temporalism emerges as by far the stronger position than its atemporal rival. Chapter 1 argues that atemporalists can provisionally account for the Son becoming incarnate, but only by being compositionalists and appealing to extrinsic change on the part of the Son. However, Chapters 3 and 5 proceed to argue that atemporal compositionalist models can neither avoid the incoherence problem nor account for the Son’s glorification. If God is temporal, on the other hand, there’s a way to uphold each of these incarnational commitments, but only through adopting a kenotic (and so, transformationalist) model of the incarnation.

When we say that God exists ‘inside’ of ‘time’, though, there are different ways in which we might understand this claim. I mentioned above that when researching God’s relation to time, it’s important to be clear about how one is understanding the nature of time itself. In Part four, the final part of my thesis, I therefore take something of a ‘step back’ from these incarnational commitments, and consider debates in the metaphysics of time. Up until this point I’ve been considering whether God is ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ of time, so it’s important to detail what the nature of time itself might be. This part of my thesis demonstrates that, depending upon how we do understand the nature of time, the way that God might relate to it can vary quite considerably.

I devote Chapter 7 to the debate between substantivalism and relationism, which considers whether time is an entity in itself that God can exist ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ of (substantivalism), or whether it’s nothing over and above the relations between events and states of affairs (relationism). To say that God exists ‘inside’ time therefore has a different meaning, depending on which of these theories one endorses. I argue that substantivalism has been
assumed in almost all discussions about God’s relation to time, and that if we instead consider time as relational, a whole different picture of God’s relation to time emerges. I discuss a recent account in this area from Robin Le Poidevin. He argues that if time is relational, then there emerge three distinct ways in which God relates to time – two of which are forms of atemporality, and one of which is a form of temporality. Explicating Le Poidevin’s account, I suggest that his single commitment to God’s temporality is novel and coherent. Nevertheless, Le Poidevin’s two ‘atemporal’ commitments, when held together, are incoherent, I argue – as well as being subject to independent problems. In spite of these criticisms, I reflect again upon the coherence and novelty of Le Poidevin’s single commitment to divine temporality, arguing that it provides independent support for my more specific claim that incarnational commitments reveal a temporal God. More specifically, subscribing to a temporal God doesn’t commit one to either substantivalism or relationism about time, which is a bonus for temporalism. Atemporality, on the other hand, looks problematic when construed along Le Poidevin’s relationist lines.

In the final chapter, I outline the debate between tensed and tenseless theories of time. I argue that in the foregoing debate over God’s relation to time, atemporalists have assumed that time is tenseless, and temporalists that it’s tensed. I consider what happens when we shake up these traditional pairings. I firstly respond to Leftow’s argument that a timeless God can exist outside of (presentist) tensed time, explaining why such a picture is incoherent. For good measure, I apply Leftow’s argument to the idea of a timeless God existing outside of Growing Block time and Moving Spotlight time, respectively, and argue against both of these pictures. This enables me to argue that a timeless God existing outside of any form of tensed time is incoherent. However, I then elucidate a new (and, I argue, coherent) account of God’s relation to time: one where God is temporal, but time is tenseless. I detail the features of this position, and suggest how it can reliably account for each of the three aspects of the incarnation that I privileged in the previous parts of my thesis, understood kenotically. In light of my arguments, I conclude that temporalists, unlike their atemporalist rivals, have the luxury of choosing between being tensed or tenseless theorists of time.
Unfortunately, as much as I want my investigation to be a thorough one, there are a number of important issues which I touch upon in this thesis that I don’t have the space to discuss in detail. Of greatest note are, I think, issues relating to the metaphysics of the Trinity. This is a growing and fascinating research area. According to orthodoxy, the Trinity is made up of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, all of which are persons. Importantly, they share a single divine essence (Tuggy 2016). There have been two main ways of modelling these commitments: Social Trinitarianism and ‘Latin’ or ‘one-self’ Trinitarianism. I’ll touch upon Trinitarian theories when, for instance, I introduce the theory of Social Trinitarianism in Chapter 4 (as well as briefly in Chapters 7 and 8). I’ll stipulate that it’s necessary to be a Social Trinitarian if one wants to be a kenoticist (but not vice versa). To the extent that one accepts this, together with my argument that kenoticism is required to model the incarnation, then I venture that one must be committed to Social Trinitarianism, too. This is an important consequence of my thesis, but unfortunately I don’t have the space to explore this separate debate. I think it’s to be expected that debates in the metaphysics of the incarnation are closely braided together with debates in the metaphysics of the Trinity, which I hope renders my reliance on Social Trinitarianism more palatable. In fact, I hope that my drawing out where my discussion connects with the metaphysics of the Trinity can be considered interesting in its own right. Ultimately, however, in order to give my full attention to the metaphysics of the incarnation, this signalling of where my arguments bear upon debates about the metaphysics of the Trinity is the best that I can do.

Relatedly, I’m also unable to discuss in detail the relations between the members of the Trinity, and the properties that they share. I’m debating the nature of divine eternity, but notably only the Son’s eternity, since I’m examining divine eternity using the Son’s incarnation. The question remains, then, whether the (a)temporal mode of the Son’s existence can be straightforwardly applied to the other two members of the Trinity. Thomas Senor argues that if one member of the Godhead possesses a particular

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11 For a defence of Social Trinitarianism, see Swinburne (forthcoming). For a defence of Latin Trinitarianism, see Leftow (2004).
relation to time, *all* members of the Godhead exist in that same relation (1990: 159-61). Mullins also suggests that it’s part of Arian heresy to attribute timelessness to the Father and temporality to the Son. He says that Arians ‘had no qualms denying divine timelessness…[to] the Son. On their understanding, only the Father enjoys these particular divine attributes because only the Father is the one true God, whereas the Son is a lesser divine being’ (2016: 162).

I’m certainly inclined to agree with Senor and Mullins, for I feel that if different members of the Trinity exist in different relations to time, this is driving too much of a wedge between their respective existences. It also seems to threaten their shared essence, which we can see above is required by orthodoxy. I don’t have the space to argue for this conclusion in my thesis, however. I’ll simply venture that all members of the Trinity exist in the same relation to time, and hope that this point is relatively uncontroversial. At the very least, denying it would leave one facing many charges of unorthodox Trinitarianism.

Furthermore, whilst I devote a part of this thesis (Part four) to considering debates about the nature of time itself, which have often been neglected in considerations of God’s relation to time, I don’t include an in-depth discussion about the nature of time in light of the Special and General theories of Relativity (STR and GTR). I’ll only touch upon these theories in Chapter 8 when I mention the independent support for the tenseless theory of time, due to STR and GTR being at the forefront of our current ‘best science’. I think that a thorough investigation into the nature of God’s eternity in light of these theories would be fascinating, but I unfortunately don’t have the space to do it here.

(5) OUTCOMES

My research findings will be significant for a number of reasons. The metaphysics of the incarnation is an area that has recently begun to grow, particularly with recent contributions from Holland (2012) and Mullins (2016). This is therefore an excellent time for me to conduct a full and unique examination into how the doctrine of the incarnation affects God’s temporal situation. I anticipate that my thesis will be an important contribution to the
metaphysics of theism. This is because it’s the first detailed consideration of the temporal metaphysics of the incarnation that considers in depth debates in the metaphysics of time itself. I argue that these debates have been all-too-often neglected in discussions of God’s relation to time, with one particular conception of time commonly being assumed without being stated. I highlight the important bearing that one’s metaphysics of time has on debates about divine eternity and the incarnation. It’s therefore particularly thanks to this discussion that my thesis is of interest to metaphysicians of time (as well as to philosophers of religion). They would, I think, be interested to hear details of an argument that Christian commitments can be understood in different ways depending on, for instance, whether time is a substantivalist or a relationist, or an A-theorist or a B-theorist.

Furthermore, my research will be of interest to Christian philosophers who believe in an eternal, incarnate God. I also speculated above that my general methodology is one which could be applied further beyond the Christian religion – there are, after all, divine incarnations in many other religions, believed in together with divine eternity. The results of my thesis ought also to be taken seriously by philosophically-minded atheists. After all, these atheists need to be able to justify their beliefs, and discussing God’s relation to time is one plausible way to do so. If it can be argued that a Christian God can’t consistently exist in any relation to time (be this outside of time, inside of time, or in some other relationship to it), then surely there’s no mode of existence for this God! This, the atheist could claim, is an important stepping stone to the denial of God, given that Christianity is the world’s biggest religion. If there are some coherent models of a Christian God’s relation to time, however, then atheists would need to justify their (dis)belief on other grounds, or else find a way to respond to these arguments.

Although my main audience is an academic one, the topic of my research is of widespread significance. Millions of people around the world believe in the doctrine of the incarnation, as well as an eternal God, so it’s important to examine whether and how these two claims can be reconciled. That the Son of God took on human form as a response to sin is an essential Christian belief in itself. Moreover, it has further implications for the faith that Christians have that they'll achieve salvation themselves. The Son of God
became human so that the rest of humanity can one day come to share in the
divine glory. Moreover, this thought bears upon our more general musings, no
matter what religious beliefs we hold: it’s likely that numerous people, whether
avowedly religious or not, have hoped (even if considered in vain) to meet
loved ones again after their death, and we’ve all pondered what an afterlife
could be like.

Now that my thesis has been outlined, together with my methodology,
and now that interests have been (hopefully) sparked from a variety of
different philosophical camps, we’re ready to begin this investigation into the
nature of divine eternity.
PART I) BECOMING INCARNATE

Because of us men and because of our salvation [The Son] came down and became incarnate, becoming man’ (Kelly (ed.) 1960: 216, my italics).

A central part of the doctrine of the incarnation is the notion of the Son ‘becoming’ incarnate: God choosing to become human. I take A. D. Smith to be presenting a challenge to atemporalist and temporalist alike when he says that it can’t be that ‘one single individual have a beginning in time and also have no such beginning in time’ (1977: 267). I think it’s uncontroversial that both atemporalists and temporalists would want to claim that the Son has a beginning in time in the sense that Christ has a beginning in time. I also think that both would claim that there’s another sense in which the Son has no beginning in time: atemporalists because He’s timeless, and temporalists because He’s backwardly everlasting, with there being no moment at which He hasn’t existed. In fact, it could be added in support of this that it’s Arian heresy to affirm that the Son hasn’t always existed (be this in a timeless or a backwardly everlasting sense), and so our understanding of the Son’s ‘becoming’ human must examine how this pre-existing, ‘unincarnate’ deity ‘became flesh and dwelt among us’ (John 1:14).

Charles Gore says that Jesus Christ, then, in His pre-existent state, was living in the permanent characteristics of the life of God. In such a life it was His right to remain. It belonged to Him’ (1992: 157). Here, Gore is emphasising the supererogatory nature of the act of incarnation. The Son’s prerogative was to remain exclusively divine, and yet He chose to become human. Holland says that the Word’s becoming flesh ‘lies at the root of the Christian understanding of the Incarnation’ (2012: 59-60). The Son’s becoming human has important soteriological aspects because His sacrifice paved the way for the rest of humanity to achieve salvation themselves. By living as a
human, spreading the word about God’s existence, and suffering and dying on the cross as a human, the Son restored humankind’s relationship with God.

Importantly, this could only be achieved if the Son truly became man: if divinity and humanity genuinely united in one single person. It can’t be that the Son merely appeared to become the human Jesus, whilst remaining purely divine, lest His sacrifice be diminished and our salvation be impossible. Mullins says ‘if the incarnation is to be meaningful we must know that God Himself has become incarnate’ (2016: 178).

It’s thus an investigation of the Son ‘becoming’ incarnate that is the subject of this part of my thesis. In the first chapter, I examine whether it can be upheld in conjunction with divine timelessness. I consider three different ways that the atemporalist can account for the Son ‘becoming’ incarnate. I argue that two fail, and that one remains on the table as provisionally viable. In the second chapter, I consider whether the divine temporalist can account for the Son of God ‘becoming’ human – in particular, in the face of worries posed by kind-essentialism. I argue that temporalists have the resources to respond to these worries, and that as such they can explain this important aspect of the incarnation.
CHAPTER 1
CAN A TIMELESS GOD ‘BECOME’ INCARNATE?

It’s surely not contestable that Christians regard Jesus Christ as a walking, talking temporal being. He lived a life of temporal sequence, being born of the Virgin Mary, and later being baptised, before partaking in the last supper with His disciples, and finally being tried and crucified. He existed at all of these times throughout His earthly life, engaging with and responding to those He met. This leaves the atemporalist with a challenge: she must be able to account for how the timeless Son of God became this temporal being.¹

When we think about something ‘becoming’ something else, we most intuitively imagine some sort of change in that thing. This change also seems to be something that a timeless God can’t undergo. Mullins certainly shares this intuition. He comments that:

All one needs is a change, any kind of change, in order to have time. Any kind of change that a being undergoes will be sufficient for that being to be temporal as it will create a before and after in the life of that being (2016: 157).

However, the notion of ‘change’ is equivocal. We might understand it as either intrinsic or extrinsic. An intrinsic change does indeed require a transformation of some sort in the thing that changes. For instance, if I

¹ This chapter is an investigation of whether a timeless God can become human – and, hence, we’ll see that more broadly it could be considered an examination of whether there can be change without time. In light of this, therefore, it can be seen as carrying out a converse investigation to Sydney Shoemaker’s – who looks at whether there can be time without change (1969: 363-381). Shoemaker uses a thought experiment to argue that there are conceivable circumstances in which we’d have good reason to infer that a changeless interval has taken place. Conversely, I’ll argue in the ‘extrinsic change’ section of this chapter that we have a provisionally viable means of modelling change without time. This chapter will therefore provide further support for the thought that the concepts of change and time, although very closely related, can indeed come apart.
become good at ballroom dancing, *I* change in being able to perform the heel leads and rise and fall that I wasn’t capable of before. This transition therefore also requires *time* in order to take place – there’s a time at which I’m quite good at ballroom dancing, and a time when I was comparably worse. Applying this to the Son becoming incarnate, then, He Himself would undergo a transformation of some sort in order to become incarnate. In this chapter I firstly discuss intrinsic change, explaining that it *isn’t* something that a timeless Son could undergo, because intrinsic change requires being one way at one time, and a different way at some later time.

I then consider other options available to the atemporalist. There’s another way that things can vary, and that’s across possible worlds. Section 2 will thus be an examination of a *modal* understanding of the Word becoming flesh, based on an argument from Leftow. This doesn’t require the passage of time, because the ‘change’ is instead constituted by variation across possible worlds. However, I argue that this account ends up endorsing incarnations in *all* possible worlds, and thus undermining any sense of cross-worldly variation. In turn, this will also undermine the sense in which the incarnation was a free act of grace on God’s part, insofar as we wish to be libertarians about divine freedom. Finally, I return to the idea of change requiring time, but I consider the option of intrinsic change happening to something *else*, so that the Son Himself becomes incarnate in virtue of undergoing a merely *extrinsic* change. Under this head, I explain that if one adopts a compositionalist account of the incarnation, we have a provisionally viable means of explaining how a timeless Son becomes incarnate. The Son can ‘become’ incarnate by a human body and soul becoming related to Him, I’ll suggest. On this account, the intrinsic change takes place in the created order, and not in the Son Himself. With (what I think are) all the options on the table and scrutinised, I conclude that atemporalists *can*, thanks only to appeal to extrinsic change, make sense of the Son becoming incarnate.

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(1) INTRINSIC CHANGE?

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At first glance, when we think about something ‘becoming’ something else, or somebody ‘becoming’ intrinsically different, this appears to be a
temporal notion because it seems to require duration, such as my aforementioned example of becoming good at ballroom dancing. This is particularly evident when we envisage something changing from natural kind to natural kind – for example, Professor McGonagall transfiguring into a cat.² There’s no doubt that this involves intrinsic change: it isn’t that the change happens to something else and McGonagall changes extrinsically as a result. Rather, she herself changes in her intrinsic properties such as mass, having no tail and having two legs. These properties don’t depend on anything else, they’re ‘entirely about that thing’ (Lewis 1983a: 197). In contrast, examples of McGonagall’s extrinsic properties which ‘may depend, wholly or partly, on something else’ (ibid.) are ‘being admired by Hermione,’ and ‘being feared by Neville’.

It might be objected that intrinsic change doesn’t necessarily require temporal duration, due to counter-example cases of instantaneous intrinsic change. For instance, the winning of a race takes place at an instant, and at that very instant the runner changes from competitor to victor. I personally think that such cases still require the passage of time, lest the runner would possess incompatible properties (winner and not winner) at the same instant. Furthermore, I’m concerned with the subject of the change (the Son of God), rather than the event of the change itself. Regardless of whether the event of a race being won is an instantaneous change, the thing undergoing the change must still be temporal. There must be a moment before the runner won the race, and a moment where the winning happens, regardless of whether the change itself is instantaneous. If McGonagall becomes a cat, she herself must be subject to the passage of time, because the change is happening to her. There’s a time at which she’s human, and a later time at which she’s a cat. Similarly, there must be a moment at which the Son exists unincarnate, and a moment at which He undergoes intrinsic change and ‘becomes’ incarnate. If there wasn’t this moment ‘before’ the change where the Son was unincarnate, we can make little sense of the idea that He really changed intrinsically at all.

² Nothing hinges on the possibility of such a change for the purposes of this argument. I’ll examine its viability, however, in the next chapter, when I examine how temporalists can account for the Son becoming incarnate.
Based on this, I contend that if the Son of God changes intrinsically upon becoming incarnate, He's *temporal*. To illustrate this, Senor outlines the following argument:

(P1) God the Son eternally (and essentially) has His Divine nature.
(P2) The human (accidental) nature of God the Son is assumed (or ‘taken on’).
(P3) X’s assuming (or ‘taking on’) a nature involves a change in X’s intrinsic properties.
(C1) …The assumption of the human nature brings about a change in the intrinsic (though non-essential) properties of God the Son.
(C2) So, the Son is mutable.
(P4) Mutability entails temporal duration.
(C3) So the Son is not timeless (1990: 157).

By ‘mutability’ in (P4), Senor means the capacity to change in one’s intrinsic properties (ibid.: 164, footnote). Senor’s argument is further supported by Hill’s consideration of models of the incarnation whereby the Son becomes incarnate due to being ‘literally transformed’ (2012: 24) into a human body. Hill would certainly agree that these ‘transformationalists’ models involve intrinsic change in the Son. He says:

But an atemporal entity cannot be transformed into anything, since to be transformed is to undergo change; it requires that the entity in question have one property or set of properties at time \( t_1 \) and have a different property or set of properties at time \( t_2 \) (ibid.: 24-5).

It’s for these reasons that I close off the first option in this chapter: atemporalists *can’t* account for the Son becoming incarnate by appealing to intrinsic change in the Son. To undergo intrinsic change requires sequence in one’s life. In fact, I take this to be uncontroversial.

What options remain for the atemporalist? After all, if Senor’s argument is sound, then this is detrimental for atemporalists. They’re clearly committed to (P1), reading eternally as ‘timelessly.’ Senor volunteers the
potentially weak premises: (P2) and (P3). He notes that (P2) might be denied by atemporalists. They might argue that the Son doesn’t ‘take on’ a human nature because He possesses it *timelessly*. I'll discuss this response in section 3, because it’s commonly held in conjunction with an account of the Son changing merely *extrinsically* when He becomes incarnate. This argument additionally responds to (P3), as we’ll see. Firstly, however, I’ll discuss an alternative response to (P3), which takes the form of a *modal* argument from Leftow.

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(2) MODAL VARIATION?

Variation across possible worlds needn’t require the passage of time. In this world, I just have two cats, but there are other possible worlds in which I’m also the proud owner of a puppy. To use my earlier example of Professor McGonagall, she’s head of Gryffindor house and opposed to Voldemort in this world, but there are other possible worlds in which she doesn’t work at Hogwarts, and is a Death Eater. Professor McGonagall and I therefore vary across worlds, and there’s no need to invoke the passage of time in order to explain this. In fact, it’s often been argued that because possible worlds are necessarily static, all modal facts are either true or false, and they don’t change in a temporal sense. Robert Adams reminds us that ‘each possible world, if temporally ordered at all, is a *complete* world history and not a momentary stage of one’ (1974: 211, my italics). Therefore, if there’s variation across worlds, there will *always* (timelessly) be this variation, and it’s *this* that constitutes modal variation.

The incarnation is something that we want to say varies across worlds. This is because of it being a contingent, supererogatory act on behalf of the Son. In the actual world, the Word takes on flesh for the purposes of our salvation, but His prerogative was to remain unincarnate. Therefore, to represent this there must be some possible worlds in which the incarnation doesn’t take place. It’s this, I think, which leads Leftow to make a (very brief) argument for a modal construal of the Word becoming flesh. I’ll call it Leftow’s ‘modal claim,’ and it’s as follows:
The import of the ‘taking on’ [flesh] claim on God's side is modal, not temporal. That God took on flesh does not entail that he changed. It entails only that he could have been God without being incarnate, and that if he could have refrained from becoming incarnate, he could have not had a body. Here I simply bat the ball back onto the temporalist’s side of the net: why isn’t this enough to make orthodox sense of the claim that God the Son took on flesh? (2002: 299)

Arguably, atemporalists could adopt Leftow’s claim as a way of explaining how the Son became incarnate without being subject to the passage of time. If we read ‘became’ in a modal sense, the Word becomes flesh because in this world He takes on human form, but in other possible worlds He doesn’t. This can presumably be contrasted with necessary facts – we’d never say, for instance, that 2+2 ‘takes on’ the property of equalling 4. Understanding Leftow’s claim in terms of possible worlds tells us that there are possible worlds that are exactly the same as ours, except that they lack a divine incarnation, meaning that they also presumably lack atonement for any sin that takes place there. According to Leftow, we therefore have variation across logical space regarding the incarnation. This is an independently important claim to uphold, for it helps to emphasise the sacrifice that the Son made for us, together with its voluntary, supererogatory, nature. The difference is that Leftow needs this variation for his modal claim: he seems to think that instead of intrinsic change, this cross-worldly variation regarding the incarnation is sufficient to make sense of a timeless Son ‘becoming’ incarnate. I was tempted to title this section modal ‘change’, but in the above quotation Leftow explicitly denies that the Word changed in taking on flesh. Rather, he suggests that the Word ‘varied’ across possible worlds.

This section will give Leftow’s modal claim the scrutiny that it deserves. I’ll consider different ways of cashing it out, arguing that it doesn’t in fact leave us with Leftow’s desired modal variation, and so it can’t be appealed

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3 Unless there are other ways to achieve atonement besides incarnation. This will be discussed in section 2.3.
4 Although, Leftow could simply be denying that the Son changed intrinsically. In fact, we'll see in section 3 that he's perfectly happy with the Son changing extrinsically upon becoming incarnate. Still, it's unclear whether he'd be happy for his modal account to be called a change in this sense – so I won't do so.
to as a means of explaining a timeless God becoming incarnate. A further
unwelcome consequence falls out of this result: divine libertarian freedom is
impinged upon. In section 2.1, I present an argument that Leftow’s claim
doesn’t give us modal variation, and respond (2.2-3) to potential objections to
the weakest premises. Sections 2.4 and 2.5 consider the problematic
implications of Leftow’s argument for ersatzism and genuine modal realism
about possible worlds, respectively, with sections 2.6-8 considering problems
specific to the genuine modal realist. In section 2.9, I outline and respond to
a final objection that can be levelled against ersatzists and genuine modal realists
alike. I conclude that, in light of these arguments, atemporalists can’t appeal to
modal variation as a way that the Son becomes incarnate, without taking on
board serious dialectical tensions.

Before we venture into these specifics, though, it’s tempting to object
that Leftow’s modal claim is a non-starter, because it’s simply too weak to do
the work that we need. Surely, even if we can make sense of the Son not taking
on a body in other possible worlds, this claim isn’t substantial enough for us to
be able to say that He ‘became’ incarnate? The incarnation takes place in the
actual world – the Word becomes flesh. Surely, then, there must be a sense in
which the Son takes on flesh relative only to the history of this world,
regardless of what happens at other worlds? Not wanting to beg the question
against Leftow’s modal account, I’ll grant for the sake of argument that we can
make sense of something ‘becoming’ something else due solely to modal
variation. My objection to Leftow will instead lie in revealing the unwelcome
tensions and consequences that follow once we apply his claim to particular
understandings of modality.

It’s important to emphasise the sense of the Son’s libertarian freedom
that’s implicit in Leftow’s claim. Libertarian freedom rests on a form of
incompatibilism: the view that our freedom is incompatible with our actions
being causally determined. It’s also commonly thought to require alternative
possibilities for action. So, I’m free to do x iff at the time of performing x, it’s
possible that I refrain from doing so. For instance, I’m free to get a puppy iff, at
the time of doing so, it’s possible that I refrain.5 There must be alternative
possibilities available to me, such as changing my mind and going home empty-

5 See, e.g. Diekemper (2013: 47-8).
handed, or getting a hamster instead. Leftow seems to require that the Son be free in this libertarian sense, because he stresses in the passage above that God ‘could have refrained’ from being incarnate. It must be possible that He refrain from taking on a body.⁶ Leftow also endorses libertarian divine freedom and the principle of alternative possibilities elsewhere. He says in a recent paper that ‘God acts freely, in a robust sense which implies He could have acted otherwise’ (2016: 47). He reads this possibility of refraining in a libertarian sense (forthcoming). This is evidently an important reason why, for Leftow, there must be variation across possible worlds regarding incarnations. I’ll now present an argument that Leftow’s claim, when cashed out, doesn’t give us his desired variation across possible worlds.

(2.1) LEFTOW’S CLAIM DOES NOT GIVE US MODAL VARIATION

(P1) The Son takes on a body in the actual world to redeem us from sin, and because of His omnibenevolence.⁷

(P2) There are other possible worlds that contain as much/more sin than ours.

(P3) If the Son takes on a body in no other possible worlds, then there are possible worlds that contain as much, or more, sin than ours, in which there are no incarnations.

(P4) There are no ways, besides incarnation, that salvation can be achieved.

(P5) If God becomes incarnate at a world, but not at other worlds with as much or more sin than our own, then He isn’t omnibenevolent.

⁶ Some compatibilists might object here that there’s nothing preventing them from accepting this appeal to alternative possibilities. David Lewis, for example, stresses that even in the face of a causally determined universe, it would be the case that I’m able to act otherwise than the way in which I in fact act. He argues that I’m able to do otherwise in the sense that if I do something which it was determined that I’d not do, then some law of nature would have been broken (1981: 122-29). However, even if the universe is causally determined, this isn’t something that God’s freedom would have to be rendered compatible with, given that He created the universe ex nihilo (more on this anon). Moreover, I’m assuming here that God is atemporal, which makes it still easier to see how He’s removed from the (determined) causal unfoldings of the universe. I therefore contend that, whilst compatibilists might be able to help themselves to the principle of alternative possibilities regarding human freedom, this isn’t something that makes sense in the case of divine freedom. It would be a mistake to allege that the determined unfolding of events in the universe – that God created and is causally and temporally isolated from – is something that His freedom needs to be made compatible with. However, a different version of a compatibilist divine freedom will be discussed in section 2.4.

⁷ Henceforth, I’ll be assuming that ‘sin’ is equivalent to ‘evil,’ so long as evil is understood as being actively caused by humankind, or by the inhabitants of the particular world in question.
(C1) (From P1, P3, P4 & P5) If the Son does not take on a body in all the possible worlds with as much/more sin than ours, then He isn’t omnibenevolent.

(P6) God is omnibenevolent.

(C2) (From C1 & P6 via modus tollens) The Son takes on a body in all the possible worlds with as much/more sin than ours.

(C3) (From C2) Quantifying over all worlds with as much or more sin than ours, the Son necessarily takes on a body.

(P1) states God’s omnibenevolence, and the purpose of the incarnation being atonement. (P2) follows from the contingency of sin, together with the belief that humans have been given free will. We can suppose that for every logically possible human, and every logically possible action they might carry out, there’s a possible world to represent this. Many of these worlds will be ones containing more sin than this one. For instance, there’s a possible world where I kick puppies instead of studying philosophy. This world (assuming it’s otherwise the same as ours) seems – quite uncontentiously – to be a more sinful world than ours. (P3) follows if we accept (P2). As I’ve mentioned, the only way that atonement could have been achieved was for the Son to truly become one of us in order to restore humankind’s relationship with God, and this is represented here by (P4). The basis for (P5) is God’s omnibenevolence being such that He wouldn’t permit worlds with the same amount, or more, sin than our own to not be atoned, whilst nevertheless becoming incarnate in our world. If He did permit this, it would make His decision to be incarnate in our world an arbitrary one, so not one that, I submit, we’d wish to attribute to a perfectly loving and rational God. In fact, it would be possible for a more loving being to exist, who is incarnate in these other worlds, and makes reasoned, fair decisions to boot. (P6) is a requirement of classical theism. We derive (C2) from (C1) and (P6) via modus tollens. (C3) then follows from (C2) because at all of the worlds with as much or more sin than ours, the Son takes on a body, which on a reductive account of modality is just what it means to say that taking on a body is (quantifying over these worlds) necessary. The contingency requirement of Leftow’s premise is therefore not met. If this argument is
sound, Leftow’s modal claim can’t explain how a timeless God ‘becomes’ incarnate. I’ll now consider, and respond to, some potential objections.

(2.2) CONCERNING ‘RELEVANTLY SIMILAR’ WORLDS

An initial objection raises its head, regarding my quantifying only over the worlds with as much, or more, sin that our own. (C2) claims that all of the worlds ‘with as much or more sin than ours’ contain the Son taking on a body. It might be objected that Leftow’s desired modal variation is in fact achieved, because the scope of (C2) is too narrow. After all, it doesn’t mention the worlds containing less sin than our own, where no incarnations are required. It’s these (incarnation free) worlds that would generate modal variation, the argument would go. In response to this, I maintain that we must restrict our scope to closer, relevantly similar worlds to our own if we wish to generate a sufficiently substantial sense in which the Son ‘could have refrained’ from being incarnate. I contend that the worlds relevant to Leftow’s argument must be relevantly similar in (at least) the following way: they must contain the same amount, or more, sin than our own.

This qualification isn’t an ad hoc addendum, but has independent motivation due to the aforementioned emphasis that Leftow places upon the libertarian freedom of the Son. Importantly, when scrutinising our libertarian freedom, we look to the closest possible worlds to examine whether it’s possible for us to refrain from acting in a certain way. For instance, if I want to know whether it’s possible for me to refrain from getting a puppy, I look to the closest possible worlds where, for instance, my history up until now, my living situation, financial situation and love of animals are all the same as at this world – and see whether or not these worlds contain my obtaining a puppy. I’m not concerned with the distant worlds in which, say, I actively despise dogs, or dogs don’t even exist. Likewise, if we want to account (as Leftow evidently does) for a genuine sense of the Son’s libertarian freedom to take on flesh, we must look to the relevantly similar worlds, and see whether He’s incarnate there. Although only one incarnation-free world is needed for Leftow’s claim to go

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8 Perhaps in order to count as ‘relevantly similar,’ the worlds in question also ought to contain inhabitants who are free in the same way that we are. This is in light of discussion that will follow in section 2.4.
through, this world *must* be one that contains the same amount, or more, sin than ours, because of the emphasis being placed on the Son’s free decision to respond to sin. Insofar as the incarnation is a response to sin, then, our attention ought not to be occupied by distant worlds with less sin than our own. We should restrict it only to the worlds with as much, or *more* sin than ours. At all of these, I’ve argued, the Son is incarnate.

(2.3) POTENTIAL RESPONSES

Perhaps the most contentious premise is (P4). Leftow might object to it for several different reasons. Firstly, he could argue that the Son didn’t need to respond to sin specifically by taking on a body. That is, there could be *other* ways in which Atonement could be achieved, such that God can remain perfectly good and loving even if He doesn’t respond to sin by becoming incarnate. A species of this objection might be the case of a possible world whose inhabitants aren’t embodied.9 If *this* were the case, the argument would go, then (P4) is false, because the Son wouldn’t *need* to take on a body in order to atone for the sins of that world’s inhabitants. More broadly, even in cases where our counterparts *are* embodied, there could simply be other *ways* (ways that we can’t begin to comprehend) in which the Son could atone for our sins, besides taking on flesh.

I think it would still be possible to retain the spirit of my argument if, in response to this objection, I broadened my claims so that instead of referring to physical incarnations, or the taking on of a body, I appealed instead to *any* wider soteriological gesture on behalf of the Son. If I plugged something like this into my argument, then its wider scope would generate the (still, for Leftow, unwelcome) result that at all worlds with as much, or more, sin that ours, the Son engages in *some sort* of soteriological action. A similar conclusion to (C3) would be generated, and would be something like: ‘quantifying over all worlds with as much or more sin than ours, the Son *necessarily* acts to redeem us from sin’. However, *any* divine action to save us

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9 Supposing, of course, that these disembodied beings could be our counterparts. They would need to be such in order for this possible world to count as sufficiently close to our own, to generate the desired sense in which the Son ‘could have refrained’ from being incarnate. After all, the more distant the possible worlds that we use to support this claim, the less we’re able to account for the Son’s free decision to take on flesh.
from sin, I’d argue, ought to be freely chosen and supererogatory – and therefore contingent. In this broader context, it would then also need to exhibit modal variation. I therefore contend that my argument can be widened in such a way that it creates a problem for Leftow’s modal claim even when we factor in possible worlds containing incorporeal inhabitants or alternative forms of Atonement. This would additionally help to respond to Leftow’s recent suggestion that:

Christians believe that their salvation is an act of free grace: that God need not have sent Christ to die for them. Even those who think that God’s love guaranteed His doing *something* to save us may think that He need not have done so by sending Christ (2017: 152).

Again, it could be responded here that even if it wasn’t specifically incarnation that was necessary to redeem us from our sins, God (being omnibenevolent), would still have responded to sin with *some* sort of soteriological gesture. This would be the case in every world with as much, or more, sin than our own, it could be argued, otherwise we can imagine a more loving (and less arbitrary being) who would treat all worlds the same. I’ll henceforth leave (P4) as it is, referring specifically to incarnation as a response to sin, but if one prefers, one can imagine my argument widened in the way suggested above.

Changing tack slightly, Leftow might object to (P5) by claiming that the Son can remain omnibenevolent in spite of not becoming incarnate (or, in line with the above, wider argument: in spite of not engaging in *any* soteriological gesture) at the worlds with as much, or more, sin than ours. It seems strange, after all, to insist that there’s a precise level of sin, at which point God must personally intervene by taking on human form. Leftow could appeal to divine mystery, and reject the assumption that God’s omnibenevolence necessitates an incarnation *whenever* there’s a world as sinful as our own. At any rate, perhaps there’s far more to be considered in what makes for the ‘best’ world besides the level, or quantity, of sin, and God considers this when surveying worlds and their need for atonement. We, on the other hand, have no real insight into God’s reasons. On this account, Leftow could argue that it merely seems arbitrary and reasonless to *us* if there are two worlds with equal levels of
sin, but God is only incarnate at one: in fact, our omniscient God has (timelessly) surveyed both worlds, and taken everything into account, and made a fully-informed decision about what’s best for each of these worlds.

In response to this, I grant that it’s possible that God is taking far more into account than levels of sin when considering whether or not to be incarnate in various worlds. However, the incarnation is of course a response to sin, and I’m therefore confident that sin must at least be an important factor in world rankings. I venture that the burden of proof is on theists in Leftow’s camp to demonstrate what else exactly could be considered in making for the best possible world. Might it be the number of people (or other inhabitants) that exist in a world, for instance? Or, might it be to do with the ubiquity of sin within any world in question? Arguments along these lines would need additional support. Alternatively, if Leftow were to explain God’s decision to be incarnate by appeal to divine mystery, then this is less satisfying given that this thesis is attempting to elucidate metaphysical issues – namely, how a timeless God can become incarnate.

There’s a related objection to (P5) in the vicinity, which I consider more troubling. Leftow might object that it’s crude to assume that sin can in fact be measured in the way that I’m suggesting. If this were the case my argument wouldn’t stand, because one wouldn’t be able to compare levels of sin across worlds. After all, it seems very difficult to imagine that there’s some sort of ‘unit’ by which we could compare, say, the sin involved in a mass murder with the sin involved in mass torture. If this were the case, (P2) as well as (C1) could potentially be denied, and my overall conclusion would no longer follow. Nonetheless, given that God did respond to sin in the actual world by taking on human form, there must have been something that made Him think that this response was required, lest the response be arbitrary. Furthermore, implicit in Leftow’s modal claim is the assumption that God responded to sin in at least one world, but not in others. It’s difficult to see how these responses (or non-responses) can be motivated without some consideration of levels of sin at the worlds in question. I therefore contend that the burden of proof is again on Leftow to demonstrate why this consideration of sin can’t be applied to other worlds, and compared across worlds.
Having considered these potential objections, I maintain that, at the very least, there are serious tensions embedded in Leftow’s modal claim. We’re unable to generate Leftow’s desired conception of ‘becoming’ incarnate, because we find that the Son takes on a body in all of the relevantly similar worlds to our own (‘relevantly similar’ regarding their amounts of sin). This is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, we can’t make sense of modal variation regarding the incarnation, which limits the lines of argument at the atemporalist’s disposal for explaining the Son ‘becoming’ incarnate. Secondly, the modal claim impinges upon the Son’s libertarian freedom, because no relevantly similar possible worlds contain His refraining from being incarnate. Divine libertarian freedom is evidently something that Leftow would want to preserve, and we’ve seen evidence of this above. In fact, I don’t think it would be presumptuous to say that most theists would want to preserve this. They’d want to maintain that God is the freest of all beings, whose freedom doesn’t need to be rendered compatible with, for instance, His causally determined actions, in order to count as freedom. Moreover, if the Son isn’t free to do anything other than take on flesh, then it also presumably makes little sense for us to praise or thank Him for doing so – since it emerges that it wasn’t a choice that He was responsible for making. There are some differences in the implications (and potential responses to) this argument, depending upon how we understand these possible worlds – so I’ll now further develop and defend my argument under the heads of ersatzism and genuine modal realism about possible worlds, respectively.

(2.4) ERSATZ MODAL REALISM (EMR)

The possible worlds that Leftow invokes in his modal claim could be understood in an ersatzist sense, whereby they’re ‘surrogates’ for the actual world, but don’t concretely exist. Rather, they’re more like maximally consistent states of affairs that form total ‘conditions’ that a concrete world could be in.\(^\text{10}\) Ersatzists are usually actualists: they’re committed to the view that everything that exists actually exists. The contents of all possible worlds actually

\(^{10}\) I don’t think it matters for my account whether I sketch the ersatzist view with regards to possible worlds being states of affairs, or anything else, such as propositions or sets of propositions: one can simply substitute in one’s favoured interpretation.
(but non-concretely) exist, because they’re constructed from things that
themselves actually exist. Ersatzists are therefore still modal realists, of a
certain stripe. The actual world is the only world that happens to obtain, on
EMR. It therefore has a special status: it’s actualised, because it’s the way that
things in fact are. I’ll defend the view that if we understand Leftow’s modal
claim as an ersatzist would, we can’t achieve the desired variation across
worlds.

Ersatzists would read (P1) in the above argument as the Son taking on
a body in the actual world – which is the only world that in fact obtains. Relatedly,
Michael Almeida suggests that, because with EMR (and unlike with genuine
modal realism) it’s impossible to actualise more than one world, ‘theists in the
Leibnizian tradition are committed to the unlikely proposition that the actual
world, with all of its evil, is as good as any other actualisable world’ (2011: 1).
Given divine omnibenevolence (P6), I venture that He’d desire to actualise the
world containing the least amount of sin possible. Ersatzists ought therefore to
assume that God has actualised, or created, the best of all possible worlds: so all
of the others will contain more (or the same amount of) sin than our own.11

The ersatzist will thus interpret (P2) as being potentially even stronger
than it first appeared, because all possible worlds will contain as much, or
more, sin than our own. Any worlds containing less sin than our own are

11 Robert Adams (1972: 317-332) disputes the assumption that God created the best
possible world. He says that God isn’t blameworthy if He creates a world that’s less
than the best, with the caveat that there be no creature in it so miserable that it’d be better had
it not existed. Adams says that God hasn’t wronged anybody in creating this world,
because the creatures in the other worlds don’t exist, and merely possible beings don’t have
rights. An important part of Adams’s argument is that God’s grace (defined as the
disposition to love independently of the merits of persons (ibid.: 324)), means that He has
no reason to love the inhabitants of one world more than any other. If this were true, then
the actual world might not be the best of all possible worlds, and there could indeed be
others that contain less sin and so need no divine incarnations. However, I follow William
Rowe (2004) in objecting that Adams has merely shown that God isn’t morally obliged to
create the best world that He can. Rowe argues that this can be true and it still be the case
that God’s perfect goodness renders it necessary that He create the best possible world.
Rowe argues that if God didn’t create the best world that He could, then He wouldn’t be
perfectly good, because it would be possible for a more perfect being to exist. Even though
creating the best was a supererogatory act (and hence, not one that God was obliged to
carry out), some other morally better being could possibly create the best world, and God
would no longer be the most perfect being as a matter of necessity. Rowe adds that if God
has a reason for picking a world to actualise, it wouldn’t have anything to do with grace as
defined by Adams, because God wouldn’t be able to select any worlds at all if He were
only judging based on loving independently of merit. Even if one is convinced by Adams,
however, I argued in section 2.2 that other worlds with less sin and no incarnations aren’t
sufficient to generate Leftow’s modal variation, because they’re not close enough to be
relevant to our considerations.
impossible, for otherwise they would have been actualised. This is perhaps because less sin would generate a contradiction in all of the ‘maximal consistent sentences’ (or similar) that are ersatzist possible worlds. For the ersatzist, (C3) therefore wouldn’t merely mean that all of the worlds with as much, or more, sin than our own contain divine incarnations – but that all other possible worlds contain divine incarnations.\footnote{It might be objected that not all worlds contain divine incarnations, because there are some possible worlds with no created life in them at all. I’d respond that equally, these worlds contain no sin either, and (in light of discussion in section 2.2), simply aren’t close enough to ours to count as ‘relevantly similar.’ Leftow would surely want the sense in which God ‘could have refrained’ from being incarnate to be more robust than this. That is, we want to be able to say that God ‘could have refrained’ from being incarnate because some inhabited worlds with free creatures don’t contain divine incarnations. This is the only way that we could generate the contingent nature of the Son’s sacrifice. It doesn’t seem very substantial to say that the Son needn’t have taken on flesh because He’s not incarnate at some uninhabited worlds where the question of salvation is irrelevant.} If this is so, we wouldn’t even need the justification given in section 2.2 for appealing only to ‘relevantly similar’ worlds. This is because all worlds would be relevantly similar in the required sense – they’d all contain as much, or more, sin than our own. There would then be no sense in which we can derive Leftow’s desired modal variation. This is also problematic for the Son’s freedom, because there are absolutely no worlds where He’s not incarnate, and so no sense in which He could have refrained from being so. Because the best (and so, actualised), possible world contains so much sin that the Son is incarnate in it, all other (less good) worlds must contain incarnations too, in response to the amounts of sin that exist there. The Son’s being incarnate in the world He actualised therefore necessitates His being incarnate at all other worlds.

One line of response here might be to maintain that the best world isn’t simply the world containing the least amount of sin. Rather, it’s the world with the least amount of sin, together with a sufficient level of human free will.\footnote{This response is a species of the objection discussed in section 2.3. The objection was that there’s more to be considered in what makes for the ‘best’ possible world besides the amount of sin that exists there.} If this can be granted, then it’s not so clear that all other worlds must contain more sin than this one – nor, therefore, is it clear that they must contain a divine incarnation. I’m inclined to agree that a sufficient sense of human free will is an important requirement of the best possible world. However, I maintain that this has no bearing on the fact that this world (the best world) has been actualised. All other worlds will contain either more sin (together with human
free will) or less sin (without a sufficient sense of human free will). The former worlds will contain divine incarnations as a response to sin and so won’t help Leftow with his desired modal variation. The latter worlds, because they lack a sufficient sense of human free will, are far too distant to be relevant to this argument, because to say that the Son refrained from being incarnate in worlds where humans aren’t even free to sin in the first place isn’t to say very much at all. We don’t generate a substantial sense in which the Son ‘could have refrained’ from being incarnate if we need to appeal to worlds which contain similar levels of sin, but unfree inhabitants whose every action is fatalistically determined. Rather, when evaluating whether it’s possible that God could have refrained from being incarnate, we must look to the relevantly similar worlds. Although what’s meant by ‘relevantly similar’ is arguably not crystal clear, I think it’s safe to say that worlds containing unfree inhabitants are definitely not ones that should factor into our calculations.

An alternative response might come from the compatibilist about divine freedom. It could be maintained that in spite of there being no possible worlds that lack divine incarnations, we can still consider the Son to be free. Moreover, the compatibilist might argue that we can still make sense of the fact that the Son ‘could have refrained’ from being incarnate. This could be cashed out in terms of the Son (being omnipotent) having the power to refrain from being incarnate at every possible world, even if He doesn’t in fact refrain from this at any. Helen Beebee discusses a version of this compatibilist response to the principle of alternative possibilities, which is to provide a ‘conditional analysis’ of claims about our freedom. For instance: ‘to say that I was able to do X, even though I did not in fact do so, is just to say that, had I chosen, or decided, or wanted to do X, I would have done it’ (2003: 259). This is a variant of the Lewisian response discussed at the start of this section (2). In the case of an omnipotent God, therefore, it could hardly be denied that, had He chosen or decided not to be incarnate in any world, He’d of course have so refrained. As was mentioned above, this wouldn’t be compatibilism in the sense that we’re used to with ordinary humans, where free will is taken to be compatible with a causally determined universe. This is because in the divine case the determined universe would itself be (freely) created ex nihilo by God. Therefore, to be a compatibilist about divine freedom would be to say
(something like) God is free to do $x$ ‘provided nothing outside of him determines him to [do $x$]’ (Rowe & Howard-Snyder, 2008). This is spelled out a little more by Thomas Talbott, who says:

Even when God acts from an inner necessity, he remains the agent cause of his actions in just this sense: Each of them reflects his own perfectly rational judgement concerning the best course of action; none of them is the product of sufficient causes external to himself; and none of them is even partially a matter of random chance (2009: 378).

The common thread here appears to be that God is free because nothing external to Himself determines His action. This account could therefore be said to be compatibilist because God’s freedom is deemed compatible with His nature. For instance, God may have no option to refrain from being incarnate when we factor in His omnipotent nature, but He’s still free with respect to this action – because nothing external to Himself causes the incarnation to be brought about. The compatibilist could therefore appeal to this understanding of divine freedom and maintain that God ‘could have refrained’ from becoming incarnate because He possesses the ability to refrain, and nothing external to His nature causes Him to be incarnate. His nature might ensure that He desires to sacrifice His divine prerogative and be incarnate, but bad He not wanted to do so, He of course wouldn’t have. It seems that this sort of compatibilism is maintaining that divine freedom is compatible with something like ‘rational’ determinism – ‘the determination of what the agent does by the best reasons’ (Steward, 2015: 68). Helen Steward observes that this is altogether different from compatibilism in the ordinary case, where human freedom is reckoned compatible with causal determinism (ibid.: 69).

I nevertheless can’t make sense of the compatibilist’s claim about ability without relying on a modal understanding of what it means. As I see it, if the compatibilist claim is to go through, there must be a possible world in which God decides not to be incarnate, and so isn’t incarnate. For instance, the Son was able to refrain from being incarnate iff there’s a possible world in which He decides against taking on flesh. Possible worlds, after all, represent the entirety of logical space, so if there’s no possible world in which God refrains from
being incarnate, we can’t say (as Leftow desires) that God ‘could have refrained’ from being incarnate. However, whether there are any possible worlds that don’t contain incarnations is of course exactly what’s up for grabs in this discussion. Therefore, whether or not the compatibilist’s argument has any traction depends on how much you’re convinced by the argument that follows in this chapter. There is, however, a great deal more debate to be had in this area.

Notwithstanding my previous worry, I think that most theists would wish to avoid compatibilist accounts of God’s freedom: they wouldn’t be happy to accept that God’s freedom needs to be rendered compatible with, for instance, His causally determined actions or His nature, given that He ought to be the freest possible being. This would also be an unwelcome result for Leftow himself: we’ve seen that he’s argued elsewhere for incompatibilism regarding divine freedom. As long as Leftow is committed to his modal claim, however, a compatibilist understanding of divine freedom looks to me like His only option.

An alternative response from Leftow might be that there are in fact worlds that lack incarnations, and this is why these particular worlds aren’t actualised, because – all things being equal – worlds with an opportunity for atonement are preferable to worlds without this opportunity. If this were the case, Leftow’s modal claim would go through, together with libertarian divine freedom. However, this option isn’t available given the indispensable assumption that God is necessarily omnibenevolent. To grant that some worlds with as much, or more, sin than our own don’t contain divine incarnations is in effect suggesting that the Son’s decision to be incarnate in our world is an arbitrary, reasonless one. It also suggests the possibility of a more loving being existing, who is incarnate at these worlds. Furthermore, it’s important to note that these other worlds might have been actualised, and if they had obtained, the Son (being omnibenevolent), would be incarnate in them – which is just what it means to say that the Son is incarnate at these other worlds.

14 Unless, of course, the atemporalist maintains that all other worlds are impossible, given God’s omnibenevolence ensuring that He’ll only ever create the best possible world. This would be to endorse modal collapse: there’s only one world that God could have created, given His omnibenevolence, and thus the actual world is the only possible world. If Leftow
I therefore conclude that if we interpret Leftow’s argument as an ersatzist would, we’re unable to achieve Leftow’s desired variation across worlds. In fact, it emerges that there are no worlds in which the Son isn’t incarnate. I’ll now consider whether modal realists have an ontology that’s any better for upholding Leftow’s modal claim.

(2.5) GENUINE MODAL REALISM (GMR)

GMR, like EMR, is a reductive theory of possibility and necessity, so, for instance, something is necessary if it exists in every possible world. David Lewis calls our world the ‘actual’ world, but only because it’s the world where we happen to find ourselves, not because it’s any more real than the other possible worlds (1986a: 92). In fact, the other possible worlds are no different in kind from the actual world, and all worlds concretely exist. For Lewis, ‘actual’ functions as an indexical term, just like ‘here’ or ‘there.’ Inhabitants of other possible worlds will likewise correctly call their own world ‘actual,’ so everybody in logical space can say ‘the actual world is the world in which I’m located,’ and be speaking the truth. According to GMR, for every way that a world could be, there’s a world that is that way (ibid.: 2), and these worlds are concrete, maximal sums of spatio-temporally related individuals (ibid.: 74). There are no spatio-temporal connections between worlds, so nothing that exists at this world can also exist at another world – lest the worlds in question not be distinct after all. Instead, we (and other members of worlds) have counterparts at other possible worlds, and our counterparts resemble us in important ways ‘in content and context’ (1968: 114). We might say, for instance, that it’s contingent that yellow is my favourite colour in virtue of my having a counterpart at another world, whose favourite colour is blue. This counterpart resembles me in other ways that are sufficient for her being my counterpart – she might, for instance, have the same genetic make-up, the same parents (or at least, counterparts of my parents), and the same life story as I have in this world.15

were to take this line, however, he’d be throwing the baby out with the bath water, because if all other worlds were impossible his modal claim wouldn’t even get off the ground.

15 These suggested traits are just examples – I’m not arguing that their possession is essential for qualifying as one’s counterpart. I think that our intuitions regarding what can
So, how would someone who’s both a theist and a genuine modal realist make sense of my argument responding to Leftow? Some noteworthy specifics are that she’d read (P2) particularly strongly, because for her these other worlds containing as much, or more, sin than our own, are real, concretely existing worlds. I venture that (P5) remains strong: if there are concretely existing worlds containing as much, or more, sin than our own, then the Son ought to care about them just as much as He cares about ours. Otherwise, we’d not be able to put the ‘omni’ in ‘omnibenevolent’ when describing God. These other worlds are equally as real as ours, and the Son exists at them in the same way that He exists at ours. Almeida endorses this when he says, whilst discussing theistic GMR, ‘the suffering of other concrete universes is no less genuine than the suffering in our universe. We perhaps have special obligations to our worldmates. But certainly God’s concern is with the multiverse as a whole’ (2011: 10). (P6) is, once again, an indispensable requirement of theism, and so the conclusion is again generated that the Son takes on a body in all of the worlds with as much, or more, sin than ours. Before considering more specific consequences of this argument for genuine modal realists, I’ll examine the possibility that their claim doesn’t even get off the ground, because we can’t make sense of timeless existence ‘at’ any world at all.

(2.6) TIMELESS EXISTENCE ‘AT’ EVERY WORLD?

Paul Sheehy has argued that if God is atemporal, He can’t exist at any genuine modal realist worlds. This is because to exist at any one world is to exist within the confines of space and time. Indeed, the spatio-temporal separation of worlds is a crucial part of Lewis’s account. This leads Sheehy to suggest that, for GMR, ‘there can be no God at the actual world or counterparts at each of the other worlds’ (2006: 318). The worry would mean that a timeless God can’t be necessary, because necessary existence just is existence at every possible world. Importantly, ersatzists don’t face this worry, because their possible worlds are non-concrete entities that don’t postulate

count as our counterparts are mostly in agreement. For instance, we’d all (I hope) agree that I can’t have a counterpart that is, say, a desk. Lewis comments on a similarly absurd candidate for counterparthood: ‘I suppose I might want to be a poached egg. (An ordinary poached egg – not an eggy creature that walks and talks). Would I then want to inhabit one of the worlds where I am a poached egg? That’s not it. I take it that there are no such worlds. No poached egg is a counterpart of mine!’ (1979: 530).
numerous spatio-temporally isolated worlds, all of which God must exist at. Rather, ersatz possible worlds are maximally consistent sets of propositions or simply ways that the world could be: we can therefore safely say that God’s existence (given that His existence is necessary) is included in all of these sets. Sheehy proposes a way out for the genuine modal realist, which is that each world consists of a maximal set of spatio-temporally related objects and ‘the domain of abstracta’ (ibid.: 319), which is atemporal and aspatial. If God exists as part of this domain, He could thus be timeless and necessary. However, Sheehy warns of the unparsimonious move of adding this extra domain into our ontology, whereas if God could straightforwardly exist ‘at’ a world we require just the one fundamental ontological category.

Nevertheless, Ross Cameron responds to Sheehy by arguing (as he claims Lewis would) that an atemporal God could exist ‘at each world’ in the sense that He exists from the standpoint of each world. Cameron uses Lewis’s argument that pure sets such as numbers exist from the standpoint of every world, to argue that ‘the theist should grant God the same status as pure sets have in this regard’ (2009: 97), and this is sufficient to claim that God exists necessarily. Cameron cites Lewis’s definition of existing from the standpoint of a world: it ‘belongs to the least restricted domain that is normally…appropriate in evaluating the truth at that world of quantifications’ (Lewis, 1983b: 40). Cameron says that Lewis doesn’t even claim that GMR gets rid of any commitment to abstracta anyway (Cameron, 2009: 97), so it could be by belonging to this domain that God exists at every world. In fact, assigning God’s existence to this alternative domain could even be argued for independently, on the basis that His existence ought to be entirely other than that of His creation. It’s therefore quite fitting that God exists in a different way from all else. Importantly, though, God needs to be the only member of this domain, lest He be considered in the same ontological category as something else – say, numbers. If numbers exist from the standpoint of every possible world, it must be in a less fundamental way than God, because everything depends upon Him for its existence, and He’s the source of all.16

16 Alternatively, one might not consider the necessity of abstracta such as numbers to be a threat to God’s creative power. Scott Shalkowski argues that ‘if there are abstract objects and if they are the necessary existents that ground necessities, then it not only makes no sense to suggest that God somehow explains them, it is also unnecessary to think that any
Cameron has thus given the atemporalist the resources to explain God’s necessity in terms of existence ‘at’ all modal realist worlds, by appealing to the standpoint relation. Presumably, people in other possible worlds can also be world-mates with this very same (timeless) God in this manner, without needing to exhibit spatio-temporal relations to Him. Assuming GMR, we can contend that the God who exists from the standpoint of each world is one and the same God across all worlds. Cameron says that ‘counterpart theory is unmotivated for objects that have their intrinsic properties essentially’ (2009: 99). God can’t be God without possessing all of the intrinsic properties that He does, and so there arises no potential conflict between His different intrinsic properties at different worlds. I therefore maintain that atemporalists have the resources to respond to Sheehy’s worry. They can consistently be modal realists and maintain that a timeless God is necessary. He (the very same God) exists at every possible world, because He exists from the standpoint of every possible world.

(2.7) WORLDS APART: WHICH ONES DO WE CONSIDER?

Returning, then, to Leftow’s claim, it could be argued that genuine modal realists are in a better position to uphold it than ersatzists. Genuine modal realists think that every possible way that the world can consistently be concretely exists, and could thus maintain that many worlds with far less sin than our own are indeed actual. They could claim, in line with Leftow, that we do get modal variation if we stop restricting our attention to possible worlds with as much, or more sin than ours. After all, just one possible world where the Son isn’t incarnate would be sufficient to yield modal variation and make true the claim that the timeless Son becomes incarnate. It could be argued that there are worlds with far less sin than ours (from the standpoint of which the Son still ‘limits’ they impose upon God threaten divine supremacy and majesty’ (2014: 153). This is because these just are necessary: there’s nothing beyond them that God can’t do, for the only things that lie beyond them are those that are impossible. It might not even be such a problem, therefore, if we posit the existence of numbers as strictly necessary in such a way that they don’t rely on God for their existence. We can argue that they remain no threat to God’s majesty and power.17 There’s a further motivation for these relations that we exhibit to God not being spatiotemporal: if everyone in the multiverse bears any sort of spatiotemporal relation to the very same God, we’re in danger of all worlds collapsing into one, simply in virtue of these connecting relations.
exists), and at these worlds He doesn’t even need to consider incarnating. This is because humanity is already in a fulfilled and loving relationship with God, and there’s very little (if any) sin. If we were to consider these (concretely existing) worlds, then Leftow’s modal claim goes through and we can make sense of ‘becoming’ incarnate in terms of modal variation. However, it seems that in this situation Leftow’s modal claim is too weak. This is because we’re no longer restricting our attention to the relevantly similar possible worlds that are sufficient to generate a substantial sense in which the Son ‘could have refrained’ from being incarnate. I explained this in section 2.2, and it’s for this reason that the genuine modal realist, to the extent that she widens her scope to the worlds with very little sin, is diminishing the strength of Leftow’s modal claim. On top of this, there’s a further worry that lies waiting in the wings if we adopt GMR. I’ll now illustrate it, strengthening my argument against Leftow.

(2.8) A FURTHER WORRY FOR MODAL REALISTS

The incarnation, according to Christianity, is unique in that it had never happened before and will never happen again: the Son’s becoming flesh was enough to atone for the sins of all humanity for the rest of time. Let’s call this the ‘uniqueness requirement.’ It’s evidently central to Christianity, and a claim that must be upheld in line with orthodoxy. If one interprets Leftow’s modal argument as a genuine modal realist would, then one faces the additional worry that the uniqueness requirement is flouted.

Given that all possible worlds concretely exist on GMR, just one such other-worldly incarnation is all that we need to be in violation of the uniqueness requirement. Put differently, the contingency that we desire from Leftow’s modal claim is that there’s no other world at which the Word takes on flesh. Ersatzists, importantly, don’t face such worries, because they hold that only one world in fact obtains, so only one incarnation concretely exists.\(^\text{18}\) If we’re genuine modal realists, assuming that God is omnibenevolent and that there exist worlds as sinful as our own, it emerges that we can’t help but breach the uniqueness requirement. This is really no surprise, given that violating it is surely easier to do than it is to endorse incarnations in all relevantly similar worlds.

\(^{18}\) Unless, of course, there are multiple incarnations within a world, but this isn’t something that I’m examining here.
possible worlds. This unwelcome outcome is an additional reason why GMR isn’t congruous with Leftow’s modal claim.

One potential line of response here is that the incarnation is unique according to GMR, because the Son’s incarnation in our world was enough to atone everybody in every other possible world. Timothy O’Connor and Phillip Woodward suggest a view in this vicinity:

Human persons vary considerably, yet God’s incarnation as the particular first-century Palestinian man Jesus of Nazareth is thought to serve God’s restorative and identifying purposes for all of us. Why not for all [divine image-bearing] creatures human and non-human alike? (2015: 231)

Here, the authors are suggesting that God’s incarnation as Jesus in our world could be powerful enough to atone every species made in God’s image, for the rest of time. In fact, it could be added that it’s down-playing the significance of the incarnation to assume that the Son’s sacrifice couldn’t accomplish such a task. If this were the case, the argument could be applied across logical space as a whole to argue that we don’t require incarnations in worlds with as much or more sin than our own, and so we can make sense of cross-worldly variation regarding the incarnation. However, there are several reasons to find this problematic, which O’Connor and Woodward are themselves aware of. Firstly, it seems presumptuous to suppose that we humans have ‘won an incarnational lottery’ (ibid.), because there seems to be no reason why God would choose to be incarnate as one of us over being a human in a different world, or a member of a different species in any world. Moreover, the authors question how creatures in other (spatio-temporally discrete) worlds could know that their sins have been redeemed (ibid.: 231-2). This leads to the related worry that these other-worldly creatures won’t feel the comfort and hope that we in our world feel in our awareness of this knowledge.

Nevertheless, one might respond that the incarnation is still a unique event even if it happens at other worlds, because it only happens elsewhere in the sense that its counterparts happen. Each of these counterpart incarnations is brought about by the Son, who we’ve seen exists from the standpoint of every
possible world. Furthermore, the other worlds where incarnations take place are all and only those in a similar state to our own regarding amounts of sin, and where the person who is incarnate is sufficiently similar to Jesus to be His counterpart, at a sufficiently similar period of history.

The problem here is that to the extent that we embrace GMR, we must also embrace an increase in number in these incarnations, given that the other-worldly incarnations are all real. More forcefully, given the spatio-temporal separation of worlds, Christ incarnate must differ at each one. This is supported by Cameron. We’ve seen he says that, just as unchanging objects don’t face the problem of temporary intrinsics, ‘counterpart theory is unmotivated for objects that have their intrinsic properties essentially’ (2009: 99). For entities belonging to the latter category, such as the Son, we have:

…no problem in holding that [they] strictly and literally [exist] at more than one world. There will never arise a potential conflict with Leibniz’s law, since there will never be one world at which [the object] is intrinsically F and another at which [it] is intrinsically not-F (ibid.: 99-100).

In contrast, when we consider the incarnate Son, we evidently want to say that His actions (although all perfectly good) vary across worlds in response to the different events and circumstances there. The uniqueness requirement thus remains flouted, because different divine incarnations concretely exist in different possible worlds. Christ incarnate is a temporal, mutable being, and so He’ll possess different intrinsic properties at different times. Moreover, it’s also important to hold that Christ incarnate differs across worlds simply because of the spatio-temporal separation of worlds. If the very same temporal, mutable being was able to exist within different spatio-temporally separated worlds, then these worlds would not in fact be spatio-temporally separated. Rather, they’d be parts of the very same world. It is, after all, part of the definition of genuine modal realist worlds that they’re unified by their parts being spatio-temporally related, and by their spatio-temporal separation from other worlds

19 With the exception of potential qualitatively identical worlds.
and *their* parts. These are important reasons as to why Christ incarnate can’t enjoy trans-world identity.\(^{20}\)

Cashing out the claim that the timeless Son of God ‘becomes’ incarnate due to variation across genuine modal realist worlds therefore leads to us being unable to make sense of any cross-worldly variation regarding the incarnation. This is because at *all* of the relevantly similar worlds to our own, the Son is incarnate, so we end up endorsing multiple incarnations. A further problematic consequence of a genuine modal realist’s interpretation of Leftow’s claim is that we violate the all-important uniqueness requirement that’s central to a Christian understanding of the incarnation. After making his modal claim, Leftow argues that the ball is in his *opponent’s* court, and that they must provide an account of why modal variation isn’t a sufficient explanation of the Son becoming incarnate. I’ve engaged in debate in response to Leftow’s challenge, arguing that Leftow’s modal claim doesn’t achieve cross-worldly variation regarding incarnations, *and* that his account results in further problems besides. However, I can think of one final response which could be levelled against my argument by ersatzists and genuine modal realists alike. I’ll now consider it, arguing that it’s not one that atemporalists can help themselves to.

(2.9) LEFTOW’S BEST SHOT

The remaining retort is that I’ve been setting up the debate in a way that *ensures* the incarnation becomes necessary. It might be argued that by starting off with the assumption that the incarnation happened in the actual world (P1), I’ve *selectively delineated* that all other possible worlds contain incarnations. Ted Sider discusses something like this when talking about time travel cases in which failure is included within the antecedent of a counterfactual: for example, when we ask what would happen in the

\(^{20}\) A further issue suggests itself here: how can Christ incarnate be identical with the Son of God, as must be the case according to orthodoxy? If many different counterparts of Christ are *all* identical with the very same Son who possess trans-world identity, then does this mean that all worlds collapse into one? Alternatively, how does one and the same being (the Son, and the various counterparts of Christ) exist *both* from the standpoint of every possible world, *and* in just one possible world? This seems to be a rather elaborate species of the incoherence problem, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.
paradoxical case of a backward time traveller attempting to kill her baby self. Sider says that ‘the antecedents of these counterfactuals concerning time travel in a sense “have their difficulty built-in”’ (2002: 124), in such a way that we’re doomed to fail at these specific time travel missions. He compares this with a non-time travel situation where failure is also loaded into the antecedent of a counterfactual: ‘If I were to try to throw the stone at the window but the window did not subsequently break, then I would slip on a banana peel or hit a passing bird or...’ (ibid.: 123). Here, my failure to break the window is guaranteed, because it’s built into the antecedent. It might be argued that by building into my assumptions the fact that the incarnation has happened in this world, I (misleadingly) necessitate its happening in all of the relevantly similar worlds. It could be maintained that Leftow has in mind something other than I’ve been assuming with his modal claim: the contingency of the Son incarnating ‘before’ He actually did so. Here, ‘before’ would be understood in something like a causal, or a logical sense of the word, such that in this sense there are no incarnations before God decides to become incarnate.

Along these lines, one could argue that God’s timeless decision to be incarnate at the world(s) He did was itself a free one. God is atemporal, and so it’s not the case that He became incarnate at our world and then thought ‘oh no – now this means all similar worlds need to contain incarnations, too!’ This would be to endorse temporal sequence in His life; not to mention threaten His omniscience and our trust in divine providence. Rather, God timelessly and freely chose to be incarnate at all and only the world(s) He did. So long as His decision to be incarnate was a free one, this is all that’s needed for the modal variation argument to go through. God may timelessly be incarnate at the world(s) that He is, but He could have refrained from being so at all of these, because He exists logically prior to them. It’s this that gives Leftow his desired contingency, one might argue. In fact, it would surely be begging the question against divine timelessness as a whole to assume that God’s timeless decisions can’t be free, given that divine freedom is indispensable to theism.

However, in my opinion Leftow’s claim has now become too weak to make sense of modal variation. If we’re able to make sense of a timeless Son

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21 For an influential discussion of alleged contradictions that arise from imagined backward travels in time, see David Lewis (1976).
existing ‘before’ any incarnation(s) (perhaps in a causal, or logical, sense), there would then be no worlds at which He’s incarnate, and thus the incarnation would be impossible. It appears that if God is atemporal, we’ve no choice but to start with the claim that He timelessly possesses an incarnate nature at the worlds in which He does – so our only option is to build this into our antecedents. In fact, that the Son became incarnate (at this world) is the very feat this chapter is attempting to account for, so it’s of course important to start out with it as an antecedent assumption. And, more’s the pity for Leftow, as soon as we do return to the claim that our world contains a divine incarnation, this means that (P1) is back on the table, and either worries of arbitrariness get going again, or we endorse incarnations at all possible worlds.

I’ve argued in this section that there’s no clear sense in which the Word taking on flesh varies across worlds, so atemporalists can’t appeal to modal variation as a way that the Son becomes incarnate. Furthermore, Leftow’s claim undermines the libertarian freedom of the Son, which is a result that Leftow himself would clearly be unhappy with. I explained that it’s possible to adopt a compatibilist account of God’s freedom here, in order to maintain that the Son is still free, but I anticipated that most Christians (including Leftow himself) wouldn’t find this option desirable. I also illustrated a further unwelcome result of adopting GMR: we end up violating the all-important uniqueness requirement of the incarnation. Finally, I considered the objection that I’ve (misleadingly) selectively delineated that the incarnation is necessary, by starting with the assumption that the incarnation happened in the actual world and then arguing that, to avoid arbitrariness, it must happen in all relevantly similar worlds. Against this objection, I argued that if God is atemporal, He’s timelessly incarnate at any worlds in which He takes on flesh, and there’s thus no sense in which we can compare across worlds before (in any sense of the word) the timeless Son is incarnate. I therefore conclude that if God is atemporal, there are great tensions with understanding the Son ‘becoming’ incarnate in terms of mere modal variation. The modal account only seems workable if we dispense with (or possibly re-work our understanding of) God’s libertarian freedom. For now, though, I bat the ball back to Leftow’s side of the net: the atemporalist needs a better account of how the Word became flesh.
In light of this, I’ll consider what I think is the only remaining option for atemporalists, and the most preferable of the three discussed here: that a timeless God becomes incarnate by changing extrinsically.

(3) EXTRINSIC CHANGE?

As I argued above, if something is the subject of intrinsic change, it must itself be subject to the passage of time, because it can’t be intrinsically one way and then intrinsically another way without persisting through a period of temporal duration. However, if something changes extrinsically, it’s not clear that it needs to be temporal. This is because it’s only changing in virtue of something else changing intrinsically. For example, if McGonagall changes extrinsically in virtue of Neville no longer fearing her, she needn’t be in time. In fact, it’s perfectly consistent (for this argument) that she possesses a device to stop her own personal time, which she activates, and Neville change his mind about her whilst she herself is temporally frozen. In this situation, she would have changed extrinsically, despite not being subject to the passage of time. In this section I’ll consider a final option for the atemporalist: she might argue that Senor’s argument given at the start of this chapter is unsound by objecting to (P3) in an altogether different way from the modal argument discussed above. Once more, (P3) was that ‘X’s assuming (or ‘taking on’) a nature involves a change in X’s intrinsic properties’. Specifically, the atemporalist might maintain instead that the Word takes on flesh by virtue of changing extrinsically. I’ll argue that if the atemporalist adopts a compositionalist model of the incarnation, she possesses a provisionally viable account of the Son becoming incarnate, because she has the resources to appeal to such extrinsic change.

(3.1) EXTRINSIC CHANGE AND COMPOSITIONALIST ACCOUNTS

Richard Cross says that ‘the idea is that a proposition such as “God became man” is true not in virtue of any change in God, but merely in virtue of a change in the created order – a new sort of relation of a creature to God’ (2002: 206). Similarly, Oliver Crisp suggests that the Son’s ‘becoming’ incarnate
could involve such a change: ‘It is not… that the Incarnation involves a change in the nature of God…what is involved is a relational change between the Word and the human nature he contingently assumes’ (2007: 129). The thought here is as follows: if at a certain time I’m taller than my sister and at a later time I remain the same height but she’s grown to be taller than me, I’ve changed from being taller than her to no longer being taller than her – in spite of undergoing no intrinsic change myself. Rather, it’s my sister who has changed intrinsically, which changes the relations between us because I no longer stand in the ‘taller than’ relation to her. Similarly, the Son (despite not changing intrinsically) has changed from not being related to a human body and soul, to existing in such relations.

As we’ve seen in the previous section, Leftow certainly shares the atemporalist view that the Son became incarnate without undergoing any intrinsic change. When he suggests that ‘the word became flesh by having flesh grafted on’ (2011b: 23), he seems (in addition to his separate modal argument) to be suggesting that the Son became incarnate by undergoing extrinsic change. If this is to be the case, something else must change intrinsically – just as in the case of my sister and me, it is she who changes intrinsically by growing. I’ll discuss the plausible candidates for undergoing such intrinsic change shortly.

In order to adopt an account of extrinsic change, the Son and His human body (and possibly His human soul, if such there be) must be understood as proper parts of a composite - just as, for instance, we might understand bristles and a head to comprise proper parts of a composite that is a toothbrush. This is known as a ‘compositionalist account’ of the incarnation, and can be further sub-divided into two and three-parter models. Two-parter compositionalists argue that the Son becomes incarnate because His divine mind takes the place of an ordinary human mind: forming a composite with a human body. Three-parters add that a human mind, or soul, is also present in the composite Christ, which they maintain helps us to account for His genuine humanity, in addition to divinity. Henceforth, I’ll refer to the human parts of the composite as Christ’s body and soul. If one prefers, however, one can substitute in one’s favoured account of what constitutes a person and assume that I simply mean Christ’s body, or His body and mind, for example. Nothing hinges upon which interpretation one takes for the purposes of this argument.
Understandably, hackles might be raised at this point in relation to the coherence of compositionalist accounts. For example, how can there consistently be just one person in this composite of the Son and a human body and soul? I’ll examine worries such as these in Chapter 3, when I turn to look at the incoherence problem that faces the incarnation. For the moment, however, my goal is to argue that compositionalist models can at least get off the ground, because they can be used to demonstrate how a timeless God might ‘become’ incarnate.

Importantly, compositionalist accounts of the incarnation are what Hill calls a type of ‘relational’ (2011: 10) model, meaning that the Son is made human by coming to be related to something that makes Him human (such as a human body and soul). This is as opposed to ‘transformationalist’ models, which require the Son Himself to change into something else in order to become human – and, so, to undergo intrinsic change. If one is a compositionalist, therefore, one can argue that the Son Himself needn’t change intrinsically upon becoming related to a human body and soul. Rather, the Son is a distinct part of the composite Christ, and it could be argued that it is something else that changes intrinsically upon the formation of the composite. In virtue of this, the Son Himself changes only extrinsically when He becomes incarnate, just as I change extrinsically when my sister grows taller than me. Importantly, compositionalists must be able to point to what undergoes the intrinsic change by virtue of which the Son changes extrinsically. Prima facie, it seems that the ideal candidates for this would be the other parts of the composite: the Son’s human body and soul. I’ll now elucidate the problems with such a view, and then outline a preferred account that nevertheless still requires one to be a compositionalist.

(3.2) WHAT CHANGES INTRINSICALLY, IF NOT THE SON?

The problem with the human parts of the composite undergoing intrinsic change in joining with the Son is that the human parts don’t themselves exist prior to the incarnation. Rather, their coming into existence is bound up in the very formation of the composite Christ. In fact, it would be unorthodox to argue that Christ’s human body and soul existed prior to the incarnation, because we’d then have two persons in Christ and so Nestorian heresy.
Alternatively, Leftow recognises that if this pre-existing person is destroyed when the composite forms, then the incarnation becomes ‘a bizarre form of human sacrifice’ (2002: 280). Neither of these options is remotely desirable, which is why we must say that the human part(s) of the composite don’t exist prior to the incarnation. However, for something to change intrinsically, it must exist both before and after the change, lest there’s nothing that the change happens to. For instance, when my sister grows, there has to be a time before the growth at which she was shorter. If the Son’s human body and soul only come into existence upon the formation of the composite, then, we can’t say that they changed – they didn’t even exist before! They simply are related compositionally to the Son. Leftow himself recognises this very worry:

In a genuine change, one single thing exists both when the change begins and when it is over. Turning from green to brown is a change in a leaf only because the same thing, a leaf, is first green, then brown (ibid.: 298).

It seems that we have the following problem if we are compositionalist atemporalists who appeal to extrinsic change in the Son. Something must undergo intrinsic change in order that the Son change extrinsically by virtue of it. As we saw in section 1, it can’t be the Son Himself lest He be temporal. If it’s the Son’s human body and soul, then they must have existed prior to the incarnation. If this is the case, however, then this initial person is either part of the new composite, which is unorthodox, or the person is destroyed when the composite forms, which turns the Son of God into a body snatcher of sorts (ibid.: 278).

Thankfully, I think that there’s a way out for the compositionalist. The intrinsic change will have to be in nature itself: in the total constitution of the world, which changes because of the ‘coming into existence’ of a composite which didn’t previously exist. This is hinted at by Cross, who we have seen comments that: ‘A proposition such as “God became man” is true not in virtue of any change in God, but merely in virtue of a change in the created order – a new sort of relation of a creature to God’ (2002: 206). I think that Cross misses the mark when he talks of this new relation of a creature to God, because
this suggests that the human parts of the composite already comprised some sort of entity. However, I think that Cross gets right the assertion that a change takes place in the created order when the Son becomes incarnate. This change is caused (timelessly, of course) by God Himself, in the creation of the human parts of the composite, which begin to have relations to the Son as soon as they come into existence. The intrinsic change doesn’t happen to a human body and soul, but to nature itself, because a human body and soul come into existence as part of a divine composite. It’s in virtue of this change in the formation of a composite and the associated relations within it that the timeless Son of God changes extrinsically. A better (although still not perfect) analogy might therefore be me undergoing extrinsic change in virtue of my sister being born. I don’t change intrinsically, but nature itself does, because something new is added to it – and this change brings me into the relation of ‘sister’.

(3.3) OTHER RESPONSES CONSIDERED

Holland advances what could be an altogether different response to my account of extrinsic change in the incarnation. He says:

The incarnation was an event, serving as the dividing line between two consecutive states of affairs in the life of God: before the Incarnation and after the Incarnation. God the Son existed pre-incarnate, and the event of the Incarnation was an event in his life, after which he existed incarnate in Jesus Christ (2012: 82).

Here, Holland is claiming that the incarnation is a stage in the life of the Son, and thus that His life exhibits a ‘consecutive’ timely structure. This is part of Holland’s overall argument that the incarnation teaches us that God can’t be timeless. However, I think that Holland is begging the question against divine timelessness by assuming that the incarnation is an ‘event,’ and that it comes ‘before’ another part of the Son’s life. The idea that there are temporal stages in the Son of God’s life is something that atemporalists explicitly argue should be rejected, and Holland can’t therefore help himself to it as part of his case against such accounts.
Relatedly, atemporalists claim that there’s no ‘before’ or ‘after’ the incarnation in the Son’s life, because He’s *timelessly* incarnate. It indeed seems to follow from the fact that He changes merely extrinsically upon becoming incarnate. What is more, it seems like this is what the atemporalist *must* say. Stump and Kretzmann offer such an argument when they say ‘the divine nature of the second person of the Trinity…cannot become temporal, nor could the second person at some time acquire a human nature He does not eternally have’ (1981: 453). Relatedly, Leftow himself comments on the relations that the Son has to His human soul and body: ‘If God is timelessly incarnate, he always had these [relations], timelessly, even at times before [the human soul and body] appeared’ (2002: 299). To us time-bound creatures before 1 AD it might have looked like the Son wasn’t yet incarnate, but this is simply due to our limited temporal perspective. In fact, the Son exists incarnate eternally (timelessly), in virtue of the fact that *at* some point in time the created order undergoes intrinsic change when the Son’s human body and soul come into existence and unite with Him to form a human being. Proponents of extrinsic change could therefore be objecting to (P2) of Senor’s above argument: that the human nature of the Son is ‘assumed’ or ‘taken on’, in addition to objecting to (P3): that taking on human nature involves a change in one’s intrinsic properties. Atemporalists could reject (P2) and maintain that the Son doesn’t *need* to take on a human nature, because He possesses it timelessly, in virtue of the fact that the human elements of the composite do join with Him at a particular moment in the history of the world.

For the purposes of adequately explaining the Son ‘becoming’ incarnate, I’ll take this argument (that the Son is timelessly incarnate in virtue of undergoing a merely extrinsic change to become incarnate) to be sufficient. I’ll put more pressure on it under different heads in Chapters 3 and 5, however. In Chapter 3, I’ll discuss the unity (or lack of it) in the composite Christ in more detail. In Chapter 5, I’ll discuss the line of argument that the Son is ‘timelessly’ incarnate in more detail, considering what makes this assertion true. For now, I think that extrinsic change, aided by a compositionalist model of the incarnation, is provisionally able to explain what it’s been asked to in this chapter: the Son ‘becoming’ incarnate in spite of undergoing no intrinsic change.
Stump and Norman Kretzmann comment on the particular difficulty inherent in the incarnation: it’s often alleged that there are problems with the idea of a timeless God causing temporal events, but this is more pronounced here because ‘according to the doctrine of the incarnation an eternal entity itself entered time’ (1981: 451). I’ve considered three ways that atemporalists might maintain that the Son is timeless in spite of ‘becoming’ a temporal being, and the fact that this process itself seems to invoke change and so time. I ruled out the Son’s undergoing intrinsic change, arguing that this necessarily requires the thing undergoing intrinsic change to be temporal. I next considered modal variation, which doesn’t require the passage of time. I argued that whether we cash out modal variation as genuine modal realists or ersatzists, there’s no clear sense in which we get the cross-worldly variation that is required for modal variation. This is due to the many tensions embedded in Leftow’s modal claim.

Finally, I considered the argument that the Son becomes incarnate by virtue of undergoing extrinsic change. This means adopting a compositionalist model of the incarnation, so that the Son is a distinct part of the composite Christ. The Son’s human body and soul are also distinct parts of the composite, and they come into existence, thus forming the composite Christ. The Son changes extrinsically as a result, but doesn’t need to be subject to the passage of time for this to happen. I therefore conclude that atemporalists have just one option: they can consistently make sense of the Word becoming flesh just in case they are compositionalists, and appeal to extrinsic change in the Son. In terms of explaining how the Son becomes incarnate, this option is provisionally viable. In the next chapter, I’ll consider whether and how temporalists can account for God becoming man.

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22 It’s evident that Stump and Kretzmann mean ‘atemporal’ by their use of the word ‘eternal’ here.
CHAPTER 2

INCARNATION, TEMPORALITY, AND NATURAL KINDS

A natural kind may have abnormal members. A green lemon is still a lemon – even if, owing to some abnormality, it never turns yellow. A three-legged tiger is still a tiger. Gold in the gaseous state is still gold. It is only normal lemons that are yellow, tart, etc.; only normal tigers that are four-legged, only gold under normal conditions that is hard, white or yellow, etc. (Putnam 1975: 140).

This chapter is an investigation of whether and how a temporal God can become incarnate. A credible metaphysical account of this is crucial because, as stated at the outset of this part of the thesis, the Nicean Creed states that ‘because of us men and because of our salvation [The Son] came down and became incarnate, becoming man’ (Kelly 1960: 216). Any account of the incarnation worth its salt must be able to account for God genuinely becoming human. Not least, this is because of the important soteriological aspects that depend upon the Son becoming a human being. If He merely appeared to take on human form, it’s thought, the Son’s sacrifice on the cross wouldn’t have paved the way for the rest of humanity to achieve salvation. Furthermore, we wouldn’t be accounting for the greatness of the initial sacrifice that the Son made in relinquishing His prerogative to remain purely divine. The previous chapter examined how an atemporal God might become incarnate, considering three possible options – which were considered to be exhaustive. I concluded that extrinsic change in the Son of God is the only (provisionally) viable option.

Temporalists are committed to the view that the Son is backwardly everlasting with respect to His divinity, and that at a specific moment of time He became human – so He ‘took on’ humanity, or transformed into a human at a particular time. This suggests two ways in which temporalists can understand the Son’s becoming incarnate. Firstly, the incarnation could be
modelled in a ‘compositionalist’ sense, where the Word takes on flesh by becoming united with a human body (and possibly a human soul as well) to form a divine composite: Jesus Christ. Alternatively, temporalists could adopt a ‘transformationalist’ account, whereby ‘to become human means to be transformed into a human’ (Hill 2011: 8). Importantly, atemporalists don’t have the resources to appeal to transformationalist accounts, because there’s no doubt that these require intrinsic change. I argued this in the previous chapter, contending that the subject of an intrinsic change must itself be subject to the passage of time. Atemporalists therefore only have compositional accounts available to them. According to transformationalist accounts, the Son Himself changes from being intrinsically one way (divine) at one time, to intrinsically a different way (divine and human) at a different, later time.

This chapter examines both of the options available to the temporalist. I first briefly discuss temporalist compositionalist accounts, which I argue are at least as viable as their atemporalist counterparts, and probably more so. In spite of this, they’re dealt with briefly, because of the preferable accounts at the temporalist’s disposal. These are transformationalist accounts, which section 2 is devoted to discussing. This involves positing ‘human’ and ‘divine’ as natural kind terms, and questioning whether it’s possible to ‘take on’ another kind essence in spite of typical arguments that one is a member of one’s natural kind essentially: ‘kind-essentialism’.¹ I examine various responses that are available to transformationalists in the face of this objection, and in the face of other objections in the vicinity. I firstly present and examine Morris’s argument, which distinguishes between being ‘fully’ and ‘merely’ human, as well as scrutinising and re-considering the properties that are truly essential for humanity.² This is fleshed out by Kevin Sharpe’s suggestion that, if we revise our traditional understanding of kind-essentialism, we are able to account for

¹ Hackles might be raised at this point, regarding whether ‘divine’ can legitimately be said to count as a ‘natural’ kind – or, indeed, whether it ought to count as a ‘kind’ at all. Related discussion is forthcoming, so I ask readers to suspend judgement on this until then.

² There’s an interesting symmetry to be found between this chapter and the next one that discusses divine temporality (Chapter 4). This chapter largely relies on scrutinising and rethinking what properties are required for belonging to the natural kind ‘human.’ Chapter 4 examines how temporalists might respond to the ‘incoherence problem’ that’s generated once the Son has become incarnate. Conversely, then, it re-examines and re-thinks the essential properties required for being ‘divine,’ or ‘God’ - in its discussion of kenotic models.
divinity becoming humanity. I consider the response that Sharpe’s revised kind-essentialism leaves any sense of the Son’s being ‘fully human’ looking rather impoverished. I next seek to patch this up. I distinguish between the taking on of an ‘abstract’ and ‘concrete’ human nature, with a view to showing that we can explain how the Son is ‘truly human’ if we postulate what concrete thing He transforms into in order that He count as a human. As a case study, I discuss physicalism about human persons – in particular, Merricks’s version of physicalism. This claims that the Son is fully human because He’s identical with – and so, transforms into – *a human body.*

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(1) COMPOSITIONALIST ACCOUNTS

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Compositionalist models of the incarnation are those according to which Jesus Christ is composed of various parts; ‘a compound of qualitatively and numerically different constituents: a divine mind, a human body, and, on some models, a human mind as well’ (Marmodoro & Hill 2010: 469). The Son becomes incarnate by becoming part of a ‘larger’ composite of which the human Jesus is another part (Hill 2011: 12-13). The human Jesus may be

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3 Henceforth, whenever I refer to physicalism, I mean physicalism about human persons. The global thesis that everything that exists is physical is of course straightforwardly incompatible with theism. This is of course because ‘any classical theist, let alone any Christian theologian, will want to affirm the existence of at least one essentially immaterial entity: God’ (Crisp 2009:137).

4 According to Hill, the main alternative compositionalist model claims that the Son acquires a human body (and potentially a human mind as well) as ‘parts of Himself’ (Hill 2011:13). Hill compares this model to putting on weight: I enjoy numerous delicious meals, and I acquire extra matter, but I’m nevertheless the very same person that existed before this indulgent spell. In the same way, compositionalists of this stripe can argue that, on becoming incarnate, the Son acquires extra parts as *part of Himself,* rather than becoming one part of a greater whole (ibid). Interestingly, it’s not evident that this account is solely compositionalist. It could additionally be construed as transformationalist, because the Son Himself must ‘transform’ in at least some sense in order to encompass or acquire these additional human parts. After all, it’s for exactly this reason that atemporalists can only help themselves to the compositionalist model whereby the Son unites with a human body and soul. This latter model, as was argued in the previous chapter, can be construed in such a way that the Son need only change extrinsically upon the formation of the composite. I therefore contend that the model whereby the Son acquires extra parts as parts of Himself is best viewed as a ‘middle ground’ account between compositionalist and transformationalist models. It involves a compound of distinct parts, but it also involves an intrinsic change on the part of the Son – and for this latter reason it can be appealed to by temporalists alone. For the purposes of this discussion, the transformationalist umbrella could be taken to additionally shelter these ‘middle-ground’ accounts. Likewise, however, the criticism of compositionalist accounts in Chapter 4 applies to these middle-ground accounts, so championing them here would only mean falling at the next hurdle.
further divided into a human body and human soul – in which case we have a ‘three parter’ model of the incarnation. Alternatively, the human Jesus may be composed of a body, united with and animated by God the Son – which would be a ‘two parter’ model.5

Compositionalist accounts aren’t explicitly discussed, as far as I know, in relation to a temporal God – when discussed in connection with God’s relation to time, they’re appealed to by atemporalists.6 Presumably, temporalist compositionalist accounts of this first sort would be at least as viable as their atemporalist counterparts. If anything, they’d allow for a greater degree of unity between the parts of the composite, because they can endorse certain causal connections between the Son and the human parts that can’t take place if the Son is timeless and immutable. Nevertheless, in Chapter 4 I contend that temporalist compositionalist accounts tread an untenable path between Nestorian and Apollinarian heresy. It’s further argued (again in Chapter 4), that the temporalist has better accounts at her disposal. Indeed, it’s a particular variant of transformationalist accounts, kenoticism, which is suggested as having the advantage, both explanatorily and because it avoids heresy. It’s for this reason that I’ll discuss compositionalist accounts no further. The temporalist has better accounts to work with, and it’s these transformationalist accounts that will be the focus of this chapter.

(2) KIND ESSENTIALISM AND BECOMING INCARNATE

Transformationalist accounts, as mentioned, involve the Son changing; a divine being becoming a human being in virtue of an intrinsic change. This could be construed, for instance, as: the Son becoming a body (which will be my case study in section 4); the Son becoming a combination of a human body and soul; or even, as suggested above, the Son transforming to acquire a

For this reason, this chapter won’t discuss these any further – the temporalist has better options available.

5 For more discussion on two and three parter models see, for instance, Leftow (2002:278-280) and Plantinga (1999:182-193).

6 Unless, of course, Swinburne’s divided mind model and Morris’s two minds model are variants of compositionalism. I consider this in Chapter 4. For defences of atemporalist compositionalist accounts see, for instance, Leftow (2002), and Hill (2012).
human body and soul as parts of Himself. It would, however, be unorthodox to argue that the Son’s divinity is divested upon this transformation, because Christ is (on pain of heresy) fully human and fully divine. Transformationalists accounts of the Son becoming incarnate thus face an important obstacle: kind-essentialism. This is the doctrine that:

\[(KE) \text{ If something is a member of a [natural] kind, then it is essentially a member of that [natural] kind (Sharpe 2017: 119).}\]

If K is a natural kind and x is a member of it, then x is essentially a member of it: it’s impossible for x to exist and not be a member of K. Sharpe mentions (2017: 130, footnote) that he’s indeed prepared to accept that (KE) holds with respect to artefactual kinds as well as natural kinds, but for our purposes we need simply read it as pertaining to natural kinds.

If ‘divine’ and ‘human’ are themselves natural kinds, it appears that one can’t ‘become’ human. Rather, if we’re human, we’re essentially so, and can’t exist without being a member of this natural kind. It therefore appears that humanity isn’t something that can be taken on by anything. For instance, a cat can’t become human, insofar as we’re talking about genuinely ‘becoming’ another natural kind. This is a different issue from the more plausible feat of appearing to have become another natural kind (such as Professor McGonagall appearing to become a tabby cat). Swinburne captures this difference well:

\[\text{A further way to analyse the Son becoming human could be, in line with animalism, His simply becoming numerically identical with an animal (see, for instance, Olson 1997). It’s worth noting that Sharpe considers his view (to be introduced shortly) to be a version of animalism: he calls it ‘psychologically serious animalism.’ Sharpe’s account will be spelled out more later on. I see no reason why the animalist can’t also appeal to transformationalism traditionally construed. Olson also argues that animalism is clearly compatible with physicalism: ‘anyone who claims to be a materialist but at the same time insists that you and I are not animals, or holds a theory of personal identity inconsistent with our being animals, has got some explaining to do’ (ibid.: 95-6). My case study will be specifically Merricks’s version of physicalism, because I think its demand that the Son must transform into a human body in order to count as human is the most tricky to defend. Olson seems to think that physicalism construed as a person’s being identical with a body is also compatible with animalism (see 1997: 101). I therefore think that there are various options available for the animalist who believes in the incarnation, but I won’t discuss this any further here.}\]

\[\text{I’ll be using the phrases ‘becoming’ and ‘taking on’ interchangeably, because for these purposes they seem to be two sides of the same coin.}\]

\[\text{Assuming that ‘cat’ and ‘human’ are natural kinds.}\]
Can the animate being which John is come subsequently to have the experiences and do the actions of an alligator? Now no doubt John’s body could grow scales, his arms could grow short, he could lose his voice, etc. so that there existed an individual with an alligator-body. But if the sort of things the resulting individual thought and the sort of actions which the resulting individual did were those of a person, then he would be a person, although unfortunately cursed with an alligator-body. What I am asking is whether that being could have the experiences and do the actions of an individual who really was an alligator – had alligator-like feelings about things and did actions typical of alligators (1977: 246).

I’m interested only in preserving Swinburne’s latter sense of ‘becoming’ an alligator. This is because, as mentioned above, if the Son merely appeared to become a human being, we’d not be able to account for the sacrifice that He made in relinquishing His purely divine prerogative. Furthermore, if the Son only appeared to be human, then his death on the cross would in turn be merely apparent, and this wouldn’t be sufficient to enable the rest of humanity to achieve salvation themselves.

Sharpe explains the problem of taking on another natural kind, in reference to the potential natural kind ‘human animal.’

If [all animals are essentially animals] then it is impossible for something to become an animal, where the relevant notion of becoming involves an object’s acquiring a property that it previously lacked, since it is impossible for something to acquire an essential property. After all, if o is essentially K, then it is impossible for o to exist and not be a K and hence there’s no time at which o exists and is not a K (2017: 120).

Relatedly, it seems that Smith is commenting on a broader problem when he says:

We must not be blind to the crucial logical difference between ‘x ceases to exist’ and ‘x turns green’. Coming into being and going out of existence are not changes that an object undergoes since before and
after, respectively, the event in question there just is no object about which one can say that it is about to change or just has changed (1977: 267).\textsuperscript{[10]}

The problem here is that we want to affirm that the divine Son \textit{became} human, and was identical to the human He became, but this is difficult given the apparent impossibility of ‘taking on’ another natural kind (assuming that ‘divine’ and ‘human’ are natural kinds). In other words, we must affirm that the Son became human, but given kind-essentialism we have to say that something \textit{new} came into existence. As Smith says, ‘coming into existence’ isn’t a process that \textit{anything} can undergo, because nothing exists before it comes into existence.

The problem that kind-essentialism poses for the incarnation is particularly pernicious because of the contradictory \textit{modal properties} that allegedly need to be possessed of necessity in order for one to belong to a particular natural kind.\textsuperscript{[11]} Morris comments that:

According to one standard account of natural kinds, every such kind has an essence, a set of properties or underlying traits individually necessary and jointly sufficient for membership in the kind. We can understand both human nature and divine nature, or divinity and humanity in parallel fashion. Human nature comprises all those properties individually necessary and jointly sufficient for being human...and likewise for divinity (1986: 22-3).\textsuperscript{[12]}

Similarly, Sharpe suggests the following commitment of kind-essentialism:

\textsuperscript{10} Incidentally, this also speaks to my argument in Chapter 1 that it’s not the Son’s human body and soul that change by coming into existence, because this suggests that the Son’s human body and soul existed \textit{prior} to coming into existence – which would be absurd.

\textsuperscript{11} The problems that these contradictory properties pose for both atemporalists and temporalists will be given detailed treatment in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively, in the form of “the Incoherence Problem.” This chapter examines the alleged contradiction only in relation to kind-essentialism, with the broader aim of examining whether something divine ‘becoming’ human is a concept that can get off the ground in the first place.

\textsuperscript{12} This is clear evidence of Morris construing ‘divine nature,’ or even ‘divinity’ as a natural kind, which one might consider objectionable. More on this below.
Sharpe proposes that some modal properties associated with being a member of the kind animal might be ‘being essentially organic’ and ‘being essentially physical’ (ibid.: 121). The problem arises when we dictate that certain modal properties need to be possessed in order to be a member of the kind ‘divine.’ It’s plausible to think that ‘being essentially non-physical,’ or at least, ‘necessarily not being essentially physical’ are among these properties, and therefore there appears to be an incompatibility between the properties required for being human, and those required for being divine.

An important and credible response at this juncture might be that ‘divine’ isn’t a natural kind at all, and therefore doesn’t carry with it any requisite ‘set’ of modal properties that need to be possessed. If this were the case, perhaps there would be no divine properties for the modal properties required for being ‘human’ to be in conflict with. I’ll now consider this response, and explain why – even if this is so – the kind-essentialist still faces at least one problem.

(2.1) IS ‘DIVINE’ A NATURAL KIND?

When introducing the problem for the incarnation caused by (KINDS), I was assuming that ‘divine’ is a natural kind, but this is a contentious issue. We might be inclined to think that ‘divine’ is neither ‘natural’ nor a ‘kind’. With regards to the former, Senor suggests instead that ‘divine’ is a ‘supernatural’ kind (1991: 353-70). If we’re buying into the idea of ‘divine’ as a kind, I think that positing it as a supernatural kind is the more fitting way to describe it. After all, God created nature, so potential problems could arise from the thought that He Himself is a part of it. Making this distinction could also help with the forthcoming argument that there’s no contradiction in being both divine and human – because they’re different types of kind. Relatedly, Morris notes an important difference between the various properties required for membership of the kind ‘divine,’ compared to those required for membership of the kind ‘human.’ The former, he says, are more commonly
known a priori, whereas the latter – the essential properties required for being human – are known a posteriori (1986: 23). This further justifies the need to distinguish between natural and supernatural kinds. Saul Kripke concurs when he says of properties assigned a posteriori that:

Later empirical investigation may establish that some of the properties did not belong to the original sample, or that they were peculiarities of the original sample, not to be generalised to the kind as a whole. (Thus the yellowness of gold may be an optical illusion; or, more plausibly, though the gold originally observed was indeed yellow, it could turn out that some gold is white) (1972: 137).

Something ‘divine’ may well be supernatural, then, but is it a ‘kind’ at all? In other words, is ‘divine’ a class, or category that can have various members? I think that divine is best not considered as a kind. I agree with Brian Davies that:

To call something an individual is usually to imply that there could be another thing distinct from it though just like it. In this sense, different people are individuals. But in this sense, says the classical theist, God is not an individual. He belongs to no kind or sort. (1982: 9).

The idea is that God can’t belong to any kinds (such as ‘divine’), because this would be to propose that there are possibly other things that are also members of this kind. Suggesting that there can potentially be other divine entities or Gods would of course be unorthodox in the Christian tradition within which I’m working. I follow Davies in resisting the idea that ‘divine’ is a natural, or indeed, supernatural, kind. Even if this is so, however, there’s still a residual problem for the theist given (KE) and the incarnation: how can we allow that the Son ‘became’ a member of the kind ‘human,’ – a kind which He isn’t a member of essentially? Potential solutions to this problem will be the subject

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13This could also be a reason why alleged requisite properties for ‘human’ lend themselves to revision, as Morris suggests – more on this below. We can imagine (empirically) finding out that certain properties aren’t in fact essential for membership of the kind ‘human,’ but that they’re instead only common properties amongst humans.
of the rest of this section. Furthermore, I will at many junctures assume that ‘divine’ is a (super)natural kind, simply because Sharpe and Morris do, and I want to engage fully with them. Sharpe in fact says that the Son is essentially a member of the kind ‘divine person’ (2017:125). Furthermore, including this assumption will present a greater challenge to transformationalist accounts – a challenge which, if it can be sidestepped, will deem transformationalist accounts all the more credible. If, however, one has reservations about such categorisation (reservations which I ultimately concur with), one can ignore this problem posed by (KINDS) and view the problem at stake as a simple matter of explaining how the Son can ‘become’ human in light of (KE).

I’ll now illustrate and consider responses to the problem that kind-essentialism poses for the doctrine of the incarnation. The first, from Morris, simply rejects (KE). Nevertheless, Morris accepts (KINDS) but allegedly circumvents the problems it causes for the incarnation. It distinguishes between being ‘fully’ and ‘merely’ human, and also re-considers the properties that are generally considered essential for membership of the kind ‘human.’ The second, which can embellish and bolster the first, is due to Sharpe, and modifies kind-essentialism such that it’s possible to become a member of a natural kind that one wasn’t previously a member of. This involves altering the traditional understanding of the way in which we can belong to a particular natural kind.

One is, of course, free to reject kind-essentialism altogether, and in my view this removes the greatest obstacle to our positing the Son of God transforming into a human being. One might, alternatively, reject (KE) and the idea that we’re essentially members of all kinds that we’re members of, but continue to endorse (KINDS). For instance, many people argue that an embryo isn’t simply human from the moment of conception, but becomes human at a later point in its development. This still buys into the idea that there are certain properties necessary and sufficient to our being ‘human,’ but suggests that these can be taken on at a later point in time. Alternatively, perhaps we can conceive of a cluster of cells in a test tube that has the potential to transform into a human – but isn’t human at present. Similarly, Bird and Tobin suggest the example of a nucleus gaining a proton, resulting in it becoming the nucleus of a different element, but are inclined to say that the very same nucleus persists through the transformation into a new element. This
would also be to deny (KE) – presuming that each element is a natural kind – but would be to accept (KINDS), because we’d still be endorsing the essential modal properties (such as possessing \(x\) number of protons) required for being a particular element.\(^{14}\) The rest of this chapter will nevertheless be a consideration of transformational accounts of the incarnation in light of kind-essentialism as a whole, with a view to mounting the strongest possible defence of transformationalism.

### 2.2 Embracing Kind-Essentialism: Common vs. Essential Properties (Morris)

Morris’s solution to the problem raised by kind-essentialism is to distinguish between certain properties being genuinely essential for being a member of a particular natural kind on the one hand, and their merely being common (or indeed, their happening to be universal) to members of a particular natural kind, on the other hand. Regarding merely common properties for being human, he suggests ‘living at some time on the surface of the earth.’ Morris says:

I think it is safe to assume it is now a universal property for humans. But it is not an element of human nature. It is not essential for being human. It is clearly possible that at some time in the future human beings be born, live, and die on a space station or on another planet colonized by earth, without ever setting foot on the earth itself (1986: 63).

The same could therefore be said to be the case for ‘being essentially physical’ – this could perhaps only be a common property of the natural kind ‘human,’ and therefore the Son of God doesn’t have to possess this property in order to be deemed a member of this natural kind.\(^{15}\) There’s then no problem, according

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\(^{15}\) Some dualists might maintain that ‘being essentially physical’ isn’t a property of humans at all, and argue that they don’t need to trouble themselves with a story of how this property is taken on. I think it’s safe to say that physicalism (at least, the understanding of physicalism that I’m working with in section 4), faces the greatest difficulties in light of (KE) and (KINDS). Incidentally, this is why this physicalist account of the incarnation has
to Morris, with Jesus Christ being both divine and human: the essential modal properties for belonging to the kinds ‘divine’ and ‘human’ aren’t in conflict with one another.

Morris expands upon his argument by distinguishing between being ‘merely’ a member of a particular natural kind, and being ‘fully’ a member of a natural kind. He says that we’re all merely human, in addition to being fully human. This is because we don’t exemplify any other kind-natures – only that of ‘human’. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, is fully human – in addition to being fully divine:

In order to be fully human, it is not necessary to be merely human. An individual is merely human just in case it has all the properties requisite for being fully human (the component properties of human nature) and also some limitation properties as well, properties such as [coming into existence] (1986: 65).[16]

Jesus Christ, being fully human, doesn’t need to possess these limitation properties – they’re only essential for being merely a member of the natural kind ‘human’. Because He doesn’t possess any of these properties, and it was these properties that were incompatible with some essential divine properties, there’s no contradiction in Jesus being primarily a member of another, ontologically higher, (super)natural kind – that of ‘divine’. He’s ‘fully’ divine, and because of this, Morris seems to be suggesting that there’s no contradiction in His becoming human, because He needn’t acquire any modal properties that conflict with His divinity. It therefore seems that Morris’s account has the resources to uphold (KINDS), in conjunction with transformationalist accounts of the incarnation. It can maintain that the requisite properties for membership of the kinds ‘divine’ and ‘human’ aren’t in conflict with one another – thanks to the different ways in which we can belong to the kind ‘human.’ I’ll now consider some responses to Morris.

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[16] Morris hasn’t provided the best example of a ‘limitation property’ here: we’ve seen that nothing can have the property of ‘coming into existence,’ because nothing is there to come into existence in the first place – lest it already be in existence. A better example might be ‘having a beginning in time,’ or ‘existing contingently.’
(2.3) POTENTIAL PROBLEMS WITH MORRIS’S ACCOUNT

Firstly, it might be argued that Morris’s account makes our being physical into a contingent matter. This is allegedly the result of dismissing ‘being essentially physical’ as an essential property for membership of the kind ‘human’. Granted, there might be some dualists who would have no qualms about this result, but it would be an unwelcome result of Morris’s account if it precluded most other positions as a rule. In particular, this is because my setup of the problem caused by (KINDS) – the assumption that humans are essentially physical, or essentially possess physical properties – seemed to more obviously invoke other positions, such as physicalism. There are of course many different versions of physicalism, but my case study in section 4 is a version of physicalism whose central commitment is that we are essentially physical – and that we’re identical with a body, no less. I therefore want my solution to be one that these physicalists would be happy with, and so one that can allow for our essential possession of our bodies. Relatedly, Sharpe (who considers himself a physicalist) says:

While I’m perfectly willing to accept that the Son is contingently physical, and hence contingently organically constituted, I am willing to accept this on the grounds that, as the pre-existent Divine Son of God, the Son is no mere organism. Yet no such considerations hold for persons like you and me. We appear not only to be animals, but essentially so… I would prefer a response to the objections that didn’t overthrow such deep-seated theoretical commitments (2017: 123).

In response to this, Morris can argue that we, unlike the Son, are ‘essentially physical’ (or, perhaps, ‘essentially have physical properties’), because of our individual natures. Morris distinguishes these from kind natures:

The many properties of metaphysical limitation and dependence that characterise you and me do so…not because they are essential elements in our common human nature. They may characterise you

17 It’s important to note that dualists who deny our being essentially physical still aren’t home and dry: they face problems in light of (KE), which will be discussed shortly.
and me necessarily. Presumably, they do. But it is not in virtue of our being human; rather, it is in virtue of the humans we are (1989: 117).

It could perhaps be maintained along these lines that we are necessarily physical, and this is because of our individual essence – the particular people that we are. It’s not possible that we be these individual people and not be physically constituted, it might be argued. Furthermore, Morris could alternatively respond that if we’re merely human, we do possess properties such as ‘being essentially physical’. Morris says that in virtue of being merely human:

We have certain limitation properties in virtue of being God’s creatures. God the Son, through whom all things are created, need not have taken on any of those limitation properties distinctive of our creatureliness in order to take on a human nature (ibid.).

We, on the other hand, belonging to the kind ‘human’ in this ‘mere’ sense, are of necessity essentially physical, and essentially organic. The Son doesn’t belong to the kind ‘human’ in this sense: He’s ‘fully’ human, but not merely human, because He also belongs to a ‘higher’ (super)natural kind – that of ‘divine’. He needn’t possess the ‘limitation’ properties that we mere humans do. I think that these responses are successful – if one wishes our possession of our physicality to be essential, the resources are available to maintain this in conjunction with Morris’s argument, using either of the responses I’ve suggested.

This leaves me to discuss what are to me the biggest problems facing Morris’s account. The first is that, whilst he seems to have the resources to sidestep (KINDS), this is but one commitment of the overall thesis (KE): If something is a member of a natural kind, then it’s essentially a member of that kind. I find nothing in Morris’s arguments to circumvent this – he seems to be arguing that as long as none of the requisite properties of ‘divine’ and ‘human’ are in conflict, then there’s no barrier to the Son ‘becoming’ human. Granted, this is because Morris rejects (KE) (1986: 42), which is why he doesn’t attempt to consider responses to it. I’m assuming (KE), however, meaning that it would be impossible to become a member of a natural kind that one isn’t
essentially a member of – even granting that we’ve found a way around (KINDS). This seems to be a problem for dualists and physicalists alike, because whatever one’s account of human persons is, (KE) tells us that such a status is possessed essentially. Upholding (KE) means that it’s impossible to ‘take on’ a natural kind, given that if one is a member of a natural kind, one is essentially so – nothing can start out life lacking an essential property, and then acquire this property at a later time.

The second residual problem with Morris’s account is one which he himself voices:

Merely to claim of all human properties incompatible with some kind-essential divine attribute that they are not part of the kind essence of humanity…can appear to yield by implication a fantastic figure of Christ. And in so doing, it can appear implausible to the point of being…a desperate strategy (ibid.: 70).

The worry here is that Morris’s solution to kind-essentialism is unsatisfyingly ad hoc, because as soon as we find an alleged property of humanity that conflicts with divinity, we just declare it inessential for being fully human, simply with a view to avoiding the very contradiction at issue. There are several responses available here. In an earlier paper, Morris says he thinks it’s ‘mandatory’ for the Christian philosopher ‘to develop his idea of human nature, his conception of what the essential human properties are, with certain propositions or controls derived from…his belief in the reality of the Incarnation’ (1983: 457). This certainly seems appealing, particularly given the logical and explanatory priority that’s being given to Christology in my thesis. Along these lines, then, it could be maintained that Morris’s solution isn’t ad hoc – it stems from an independent motivation to prioritise the incarnation as sacrosanct, and to allow our other commitments to be shaped around this.

The temporalist can also strengthen this defence metaphysically, thanks to a recent argument from Sharpe. Temporalists could maintain that it’s not ad hoc to deny that certain allegedly essential properties for being human are essential. They could claim that the account of kind-essentialism that we’ve so far been working with isn’t exactly right. If we work with Sharpe’s adapted
account, we have the resources to better explain how the Son can become fully human (whilst remaining divine), in spite of not possessing properties such as ‘being essentially organic’ and ‘being essentially physical’. This involves a modification of (KINDS).

Importantly, Sharpe’s account also involves a rejection of (KE) in its traditional form, which gives one the resources to explain (where Morris’s can’t) how something can ‘become’ a member of another natural kind. This revision of (KE) thus avoids the worry that divinity can’t become humanity – the worry that if one is a member of a particular natural kind, one is essentially a member. Sharpe’s account will be the subject of the subsequent section.

(2.4) MODIFYING KIND-ESSENTIALISM: DOMINANT KINDS (SHARPE)

Sharpe argues that it’s possible for an individual to belong to multiple natural kinds, and yet to only possess the modal properties of one, which is its dominant kind. He says that an object’s dominant kind is a matter of what that object is ‘most fundamentally’:

Every object belongs to exactly one kind dominantly and for any kind K, there is a set of modal properties, M, such that necessarily, for any \( \chi \), \( \chi \) has the members of M if and only if \( \chi \) belongs to K dominantly (2017: 124).

This is therefore a modification of (KINDS), because \( \chi \) can be a member of a kind (non-dominantly) without possessing the modal properties required for membership of that kind. How do we decide whether we belong to K dominantly? Sharpe follows Michael Rea, who suggests that:

(DOMINANT KINDS) For any \( \chi \), K is \( \chi \)'s dominant kind just in case (i) \( \chi \) is essentially a K, and (ii) for any kind K’ such that \( \chi \) is essentially a K’, \( \chi \)'s being a K entails \( \chi \)'s being a K’ (2000: 187).

We might say, for instance, that ‘dog’ is my future pet’s dominant kind, because that pet is essentially a dog. She’s also essentially (for example) an animal and a mammal, and her being a dog entails her being an animal and a
mammal. Rea doesn’t discuss the incarnation when proposing (DOMINANT KINDS), but his paper helps us to see what Sharpe has in mind. Sharpe adds that ‘an object’s dominant kind provides metaphysically the best answer to the question “what is it?”’ (2017: 124). Helpfully, this chimes with Morris’s suggestion that for us, ‘humanity crowns our ontological status as the greatest foothold we have in the grand scheme of things’ (1989: 117). It therefore seems that Morris would concur with Sharpe that our dominant kind is ‘human person’, or at least ‘human,’ because we’re most fundamentally human persons, and we possess the essential modal properties for membership of this kind.\(^{18}\)

This, following Rea’s condition, entails that we’re animals, and persons, given that we’re also essentially animals and persons. We’re not dominantly animals or persons, though, because ‘human person’ dominates both person and animal (Sharpe 2017: 125). In the case of Jesus Christ, He’s a human person, but only non-dominantly, says Sharpe. Furthermore:

It’s reasonable to believe that the Son’s dominant kind is something like divine person (of which there are two, and only two, other members). Since individuals have their modal properties in virtue of their dominant kind, the incarnate Son does not have the modal properties associated with either animal or human person even though he’s both. Thus, there’s no essentialist ground for objecting to the immaterial divine Son’s becoming a living human organism (ibid.).\(^{19}\)

Sharpe’s account could reasonably be adopted to enhance Morris’s distinction between being ‘merely’ and ‘fully’ human. The Son is fully human,

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\(^{18}\) ‘Human person’ is Sharpe’s term. It stems from his own position, which he calls ‘psychologically serious animalism.’ He notes that it differs from traditional animalism because his position also says that (in addition to our being essentially animals), we’re essentially human persons. Sharpe argues that this is compatible with our being essentially psychological beings (2015: 53-72). He thinks that ‘human person’ is our dominant kind, and that we’re non-dominantly ‘humans,’ ‘persons’ and ‘animals’ (2017:126). I don’t have the space to analyse the animalist aspect of Sharpe’s argument here, and so I’ll not place any argumentative weight on his preferred dominant kind – I’ll assume that we’re dominantly ‘human,’ rather than adhering to Sharpe’s more specific preference. When citing Sharpe using the term ‘human person,’ I simply mean ‘human.’ If one does prefer that we’re dominantly ‘human persons’, however, I think that the same problems stand for the incarnation anyway, if we continue to assume (KE), (KINDS), and ‘divine’ as a supernatural kind.

\(^{19}\) Sharpe is evidently suggesting that the Father and Holy Spirit are also members of the kind ‘divine person’, or ‘divine’, a claim which some might be sceptical about. I don’t think that anything hinges upon the need to postulate this in my thesis.
and He’s also a member of the ontologically higher ‘dominant’ kind that is ‘divine,’ or ‘divine person’. The Son can therefore become incarnate by becoming a member of the natural kind ‘human person’, but still remain dominantly a member of the natural kind ‘divine person’. In virtue of belonging to these natural kinds, Jesus Christ is both fully divine and fully human, it could be argued. Sharpe doesn’t mention Morris’s argument at all in his paper, but drawing this parallel between their accounts only strengthens them, I think. It helps to account not merely for the Son’s transformation into a member of another natural kind, but also the retention of His initial (super)natural kind membership: that of ‘divine’.

Furthermore, Sharpe’s account has the resources to respond to the worry that the Son’s contingent physicality makes all humans only contingently physical. It’s one’s dominant kind that determines whether or not one is essentially physical, Sharpe maintains (2017: 128), and therefore we humans are essentially physical, whereas the Son (being dominantly divine) is only contingently physical, because He needn’t have become human.

So, the Son became a member of the natural kind ‘human’ as a matter of contingent fact. This still involves Him becoming a member of a natural kind, though, so how does one avoid the worries caused by (KE)? If we’re essentially a member of all (super)natural kinds we’re a member of, then how can Sharpe explain our becoming a member of another (super)natural kind at a later time? We’ve seen how Sharpe can modify (KINDS) so as not to be problematic for transformationalist accounts of the incarnation, but this is only half of the story.

The second condition of (DOMINANT KINDS) was as follows:

…for any kind K’ such that x is essentially a K’, x’s being a K entails x’s being a K’ (Rea 2000: 187).

So, if the Son is essentially a human, then His being a divine person entails His being a human. But this is unorthodox: the Son’s being divine doesn’t entail His
being human – the incarnation is a supererogatory, contingent event – the Son chose to take on flesh; this can’t simply fall out of the fact that He’s divine.  

Sharpe is aware of this. He says that ‘the Son is not essentially a human person since he was not human prior to the incarnation’ (2017: 125). According to Sharpe, we can also be members of a natural kind without being essentially so – we can be accidental members, whereby it’s possible for us to exist without being a member of that natural kind. Incidentally, Morris seems to be hinting at something like dominant kind-membership when he discusses being ‘typical’ members of kinds. He says:

A typical member of a kind has its individual identity tied to that kind essentially. In this sense of the word ‘typical,’ Jesus Christ was not a typical human being, although he exemplified the fullness of human nature. He was and is a typical member of the higher kind-nature of divinity’ (1986: 42).

I think that Morris would therefore concur with Sharpe that Jesus Christ is an accidental (not a typical) member of the kind ‘human’, whereas He’s typically (dominantly) a member of the kind ‘divine’.

To illustrate what he means by accidental kind-membership, Sharpe refers to Rea’s example of a case of ‘found art’: an eroded rock face that’s dominantly a ‘lump of rock,’ but accidentally and non-dominantly happens to be a ‘statue of Elvis’ (Sharpe 2017: 131 (footnote) & Rea 2000: 188-9). One might plausibly object to the idea of lump of rock being (as opposed to ‘looking like’) a statue of Elvis. Alternatively, one might not consider ‘statue of Elvis’ to be a kind at all. Luckily, an alternative option is available for such objectors. This is to stress that there are no credible examples of accidental kind membership aside from the incarnation. One could say that this is exactly as it should be, given the metaphysical uniqueness of the incarnation. It could be maintained that nothing that’s a part of the created order can ‘accidentally’ belong to a natural kind: it can only belong essentially – whether this is

20 Indeed, in the previous chapter, I emphasised the importance of our account of the incarnation being able to maintain the contingency of the Son’s decision to take on flesh.
dominantly or non-dominantly. The Son, however, not being a part of creation, is free to take on accidental kind membership.

The take home message of Sharpe’s account is that we can essentially be members of a kind, and this is necessary, but not sufficient, for that being our dominant kind (just as in the case of my future pet being essentially mammal, but dominantly a dog). In order for a kind to be a dominant kind, that kind membership also needs to entail membership of all the other kinds that we happen to be essential, non-dominant members of. Alternatively, we can be non-dominant accidental members of a kind. This suggests a modification of (KE). Recall that according to (KE), if something is a member of a kind, then it’s essentially a member of that kind.

It might be objected that tampering with (KE) throws the baby out with the bath water – what have we left of kind-essentialism at all, if we’re allowing that we can belong to some natural kinds accidentally? My response here is that in order to allow that something belongs to a kind accidentally, it must still belong to at least one other kind, its dominant kind, essentially. So perhaps Sharpe would revise (KE) thus:

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(KE 2) \text{ If something is a member of a kind, then it's either accidentally or essentially a member of that kind. Something can be accidentally a member of a kind iff it's dominantly a member of another kind.}
\]

I think that (KE 2) still preserves kind-essentialism, of a sort. It still preserves the requirement of our belonging to certain kinds (our most fundamental kinds, no less) essentially, after all.

In light of these clarifications, however, the Son’s being a member of the kind ‘human’ is now starting to look rather tenuous. He can’t be essentially a human, because then His being dominantly divine would need to entail His being human, which is far too strong – as well as unorthodox. Instead, the Son should be said to be human ‘accidentally’. He’s a member of the natural kind human, but not essentially, meaning that He can exist (as He does), without being human. Sharpe says that his account ‘allows for non-dominant contingent kind membership’. Moreover, the Son doesn’t possess all of the set of modal properties required for being human essentially. Sharpe endorses this
when he says: ‘Since individuals have their modal properties in virtue of their
dominant kind, the incarnate Son does not have the modal properties
associated with either human animal or human person even though he’s both’

In virtue of what, then, is the Son ‘fully human’? The appeal of
Sharpe’s account is that it suggests a way for something to ‘take on’
membership of a natural kind, contrary to traditional kind-essentialist worries
that such a feat is impossible. Sharpe needs to say more, however, about how
the Son counts as ‘fully human’, rather than merely ‘accidentally’ human – no
more a human than a weathered rock face happens to resemble a statue of
Elvis. The Son must be wholly human if our account is to be orthodox, and if
we’re to preserve a robust sense in which He sacrificed His ‘purely’ divine
prerogative and chose to ‘become’ human. After all, the incarnation was by no
means an accident.

In order to help us to understand this, the next section discusses two
different senses in which we might be said to possess human nature: abstract
and concrete. We’ll see that the chapter has so far considered only abstract
senses of ‘taking on’ human nature, and that it’s possible to bolster these with
concrete accounts of the Word becoming flesh, which will lend a much fuller
sense to the humanity of Christ.

(3) INTERLUDE: ABSTRACT AND CONCRETE NATURE
INCARNATIONS

Section 2 examined how the Son might transform into a human
through arguing for the coherence of His assuming the property of human
nature – ‘whatever property it is that is necessary and sufficient for being
human’ (Plantinga 1999: 183). I assumed that ‘the term ‘human nature’ denotes
a property (or, if you like, group of properties): the property P which is such that
necessarily, every human being has P, and necessarily whatever has P is a
human being’ (ibid.: 184). Plantinga dubs this the ‘abstract nature’ (ibid.) view
of the incarnation, and it’s important to see that the previous section assumed
this view when considering the viability of the Son ‘becoming’ human. The
alternative (although not opposing) account is the ‘concrete nature’ view,
whereby ‘the thing denoted by ‘human nature’ and that gets assumed [by the Son] is a human being, a concrete object, not an abstract object like a property’ (ibid.). When I discussed the Son ‘becoming’ human in spite of worries posed by (KE) and (KINDS), I simply stated this, as though it’s some abstract property that is acquired. More specifically, I didn’t specify any concrete thing in virtue of which the Son is accidentally human.

Leftow amends Plantinga’s description of the concrete nature view, noting that if the Son were to ‘assume’ a particular human being, we’d have Nestorian heresy. The Son would ‘team up’ with a pre-existing person, or ‘take over’ that person in a possessive sense – both of which Leftow dismisses as unorthodox (2002: 278). Instead, he proposes the following construal of the concrete nature view:

On the concrete nature view, the ‘human nature’ the Son assumes is a full natural endowment of a human being, that is, a human body and (if such there be) soul, ‘carrying’ a human mind and will. On the concrete nature view, then, to take on human nature is to acquire such an endowment; what the Son assumed is not a human being, but the natural endowment of one (ibid.).

Importantly, the concrete nature view doesn’t necessarily entail a commitment to either dualism or physicalism – one can simply plug in one’s preferred view of what a human being is, and say that the Son acquires, or transforms into, that. Relatedly, the concrete nature view can (I think) be appealed to by both transformationalists and compositionalists. The former can say that the Son transforms into a concrete human endowment. The latter can (and do) say that the Son acquires such an endowment.  

21 Leftow himself is a

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21 Hill comments that it’s often abstract nature views that go hand in hand with transformationalist accounts, and concrete nature views with compositionalist (he calls these a species of ‘relational’ models of the incarnation) accounts (2011: 11-12). However, I think that this needn’t be the case. This is firstly because of Leftow’s argument (outlined shortly) that the abstract and concrete nature views are in fact intimately related, and that the latter is in fact necessary for the former. Secondly, I think that one could consistently be a transformationalist and think that the Son transformed into something, a concrete particular such as a human body or a human body and mind, in virtue of which He’s human. There will be more discussion on this shortly. Comparably, one could be a compositionalist who claims that the Son acquires certain ‘human-making’ properties when He becomes incarnate, in addition to concrete ‘parts’. Here I also appeal to Thomas Flint,
compositionalist, so perhaps this explains his choice of the word ‘acquires’ in his above definition. I mentioned that the abstract and concrete nature views aren’t in conflict. Instead, they’re intimately related. Indeed, Leftow suggests that where we find one, we find the other: we acquire the (abstract) property of human nature only if we acquire a (concrete) human endowment. Likewise, we acquire this (concrete) human endowment only if by doing so we come to exemplify the (abstract) property of human nature (ibid.: 278-9). However, Leftow proposes that:

The symmetry ends there. One does not usually interact directly with properties, ‘assuming’ or ‘exemplifying’ them. Concrete things act, and in virtue of their activities, they come to exemplify properties. Abstract-nature incarnation can take place only by concrete-nature incarnation. In this sense, the concrete nature view of the incarnation has to be basic (ibid.: 279).

Armed as we now are with this important distinction, and desiring an account of the Son becoming incarnate complete with a robust sense of the Son’s humanity, I’ll examine concrete nature views of the Son becoming incarnate. Given that these views are the more fundamental, they’ll help us understand how the Son becomes ‘fully human’ in the abstract sense that has been discussed thus far. I’ll consider as a case study the view that I believe (and have hinted above) is the hardest to reconcile with kind-essentialism. This is physicalism: the view that a human just is a physical substance. Whilst there are many different versions of physicalism, I’ll be focusing on a version which I believe to be the hardest of all to reconcile with transformationalist accounts of who argues (2011) that it’s a ‘misconception’ (ibid.: 86) to exclusively pair the ‘concrete nature’ view with a compositionalist (he calls it ‘mereological’) model of the incarnation. He says ‘the arguments in favour of concretism are independent of the mereological models, and their soundness doesn’t depend on these models’ (ibid.).

22 The other verb that Leftow uses in the above passage to demonstrate the taking on of a concrete human nature is the more worrying ‘assume’. Perhaps he’s borrowing it from Plantinga, and in any case Leftow is keen to emphasise that a human endowment is not assumed by the Son in the sense that a human is possessed, or taken over, by the Son. This is not least because we’d then risk charges of Nestorianism. There will be more discussion on this, and on how Leftow claims that his account avoids Nestorianism, in Chapter 3.
the incarnation. This is the view that humans just are physical bodies, and to be embodied is to be \textit{identical with} one’s body. Merricks champions this view, construed as a transformationalist account of the incarnation (2007: 281-300). In order for the Son to become incarnate, Merricks says that this omniscient, omnipotent being was literally transformed into a human body (ibid.: 294). As I hinted above, these sorts of physicalist commitments arguably produce the biggest conflict between the modal properties required for kind-membership of both ‘divine’ and ‘human’ (such as ‘being essentially non-physical’ vs. ‘being essentially physical’). Henceforth, when I refer to ‘physicalism’, unless stated otherwise I mean specifically the view that humans are identical to their bodies. I’ll argue that a physicalist incarnation \textit{is} provisionally viable, and suggest that this in turn can’t be anything other than promising for those who hold alternative accounts of human persons.

\textbf{(4) CASE STUDY: PHYSICALISM AND THE INCARNATION}

Given that the Son of God is an immaterial being, physicalism is perhaps the trickiest position to uphold in conjunction with transformationalism, because one must assert that when the Son becomes incarnate, something incorporeal is literally transformed into something physical. This is potentially problematic for a number of reasons, not least because an essential property of divinity might be something like ‘not possessing any physical properties’. Plantinga expresses related worries:

If…as materialists assert, to be a human being is to be a material object, then the second person of the Trinity must have become a material object…but then an immaterial being became a material object; and this seems to me to be impossible. It is clearly impossible, I’d say, that the number seven or the proposition that $7+5 = 12$…should become, turn into, material objects. It is less clearly impossible, but still impossible…that the second person of the Trinity
— that personal being with will and intellect and affection — should turn into a material object (1999: 186).\(^{23}\)

For good measure, Leftow is equally opposed to physicalist accounts of the incarnation:

To me, materialist Christologies are non-starters. My intuitions say that [the Son being identical to a body] is flatly impossible. How could an immaterial thing become material? How could something relevantly like a soul become something relevantly like a stone? The answer seems to me, ‘it couldn’t’ (2011b: 21).

Plantinga and Leftow are evidently highly sceptical of whether the Son can become human if concretely taking on a human nature is to become a material object — i.e. a body. Merricks, however, would beg to differ. He argues that it is plausible for the Son to become a human body — indeed, that this is preferable to dualist accounts. He says that those opposed to the Son becoming a body presuppose that there’s:

...a ‘bigger difference’ between the divine and (alleged) physical humans than there is between the divine and (alleged) non-physical humans. But, in reply, the difference between God the Son and each of us is staggering. The difference between a non-physical human person and a physical person is comparatively trivial. If we believe that God the Son became a human being, we have swallowed the camel. To insist that God the Son could not possibly become a **physical** human is to strain out a gnat (2007: 297).

Although my argument here definitely requires more than gnat-straining, I certainly agree that there’s a *far* greater difference between divinity and humanity than there would be between a physical and a non-physical person. It would surely be down-playing God’s greatness to suggest anything

\(^{23}\) I see no reason why ‘materialism’ here can’t be used interchangeably with ‘physicalism’. Moreover, Plantinga seems to be referring to the specific version of physicalism that’s the subject of this section.
to the contrary. I therefore follow Merricks in not considering Plantinga and Leftow’s views to be detrimental to the possibility of physicalist incarnation.

What other worries might one have with the Son becoming a human body? Merricks dismisses the response that a material Son won’t be able to possess mental properties. He says that we *obviously* do possess mental properties, but notes that this is compatible with physicalism. He says ‘while the physicalist says that a human person has physical properties, she does not insist that a human person has only physical properties. Persons also have mental properties’ (ibid.: 295). This additionally helps the physicalist to respond to claims that her account is heretical in denying the Son a ‘rational soul’ (Swinburne 2011: 157). According to the Chalcedonian Creed, Jesus Christ was animated by this rational, human soul, and it’s considered Apollinarian heresy to deny Him this.24 It could be maintained here, as before, that Christ incarnate *does* possess a rational ‘soul’, or indeed ‘mind’, in virtue of the mental properties that He possesses in the same way that other humans do, and all of this is perfectly consistent with being a physicalist.

Crisp offers a related and more detailed account of how physicalists can avoid Apollinarian heresy and grant Christ a ‘rational soul’: adopt property dualism. He says that ‘Christian materialists who are property dualists can claim that human persons are essentially material beings that have certain irreducibly mental properties including having the right sort of mental life necessary for being human, the capacity for consciousness and experience’ (2009: 148). Crisp says that ‘property dualism concerns properties that are distinct, and that refer to either the mental or physical life of a substance. Also, property dualists hold that the content of mental properties refers to something irreducibly mental, or immaterial, whereas the content of physical properties refers to something irreducibly physical’ (ibid.: 147). Merricks himself agrees that his version of

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24 For similar reasons, two parter models (compositionalist models containing God the Son and a human body) of the incarnation are sometimes alleged to be heretical, because they fail to attribute a human mind to Christ (see e.g. Hill 2011:14). The physicalist transformationalist models that we’re considering ought perhaps to be considered ‘one parter’ if we’re pressed: the Son transforms into a single thing, a human body. He’s identical with this human body, which makes Him fully human, and yet He’s also fully divine. I think it would be begging the question against such transformationalist accounts to say that they’re unorthodox simply because they’re one parter. I see no *prima facie* reason why a single whole can’t be both divine and human. Besides, it’s only really compositionalist who are in the business of assigning various ‘parts’ to a ‘composite’ Christ (see section 1), and transformationalists shouldn’t be criticised simply for failing to choose such a way of modelling their account.
physicalism is consistent with irreducible mental properties. He says: ‘physicalism, as I understand it, is consistent with a physical person’s mental properties’ being *sui generis*, being irreducible to physical properties’ (2007: 295).

It might be objected, however, that there’s a deeper worry here regarding the nature of the divine mental properties. God is omnipotent and omniscient, and how can *these* attributes be squared with our being essentially physical? Hill worries that ‘a human body could not directly exercise omnipotent power. And a human brain could not have the capacity to store the infinite amount of knowledge required for omniscience’ (2012:11). Omnipotence and omniscience seem to be properties which require one to be essentially *not* entirely physical. I’ll postpone a response to this particular worry until Chapter 4, as it’s better placed in relation to the incoherence problem. I’ll grant until then that there’s no problem with an essentially physical incarnate Christ possessing (typical) mental properties, and move to discussing the links between Merricks’s position and the earlier worries posed by kind-essentialism.

(4.1) REJECTING KIND-ESSENTIALISM? (MERRICKS)

Interestingly, Merricks thinks that his account is incompatible with kind-essentialism, for the reasons listed at the outset of this chapter. He says that ‘given kind-essentialism, physical objects are essentially physical objects. Nothing can start out lacking an *essential* property and then later acquire it…kind-essentialism implies that something that starts out as a non-physical object cannot possibly become a physical object’ (2007: 296). On this basis, Merricks rejects kind-essentialism, and seems to think that once he’s done so there are no remaining obstacles to his view that the non-physical Son becomes a physical human being (2007: 296). Importantly, Merricks’s argument demarcates natural kinds that are different to those I’ve been working with thus far. For instance, he uses the more coarsely–grained ‘physical object’ as a natural kind, and says that ‘human soul’ is also a natural kind if one is a dualist. This classification means that, he argues, *all* believers in the incarnation (whether dualist or physicalist) must reject kind-essentialism (ibid.), since either way the Son is (*per impossibile*) taking on something essential. This would of course be problematic, since I’m arguing that the Son can
transform into a human being (including an essentially physical one) even if kind-essentialism holds true.

Luke Van Horn, however, suggests that the main worry facing physicalists isn’t in fact kind-essentialism. He says that the intuition that the immaterial can’t become material rests ‘rather on the idea that immateriality entails properties which are plausibly thought to be essentially had by everything that has them and are inconsistent with properties entailed by materiality’ (2010: 339). I fail to see how Van Horn’s alternative suggestion here is anything other than a kind-essentialist commitment. It’s a variation of (KINDS) – in order for something to count as ‘immaterial,’ it must possess all of a certain set of modal properties, and likewise for being material. Furthermore, I agree with Merricks that traditional kind-essentialism is incompatible with physicalist transformationalist accounts of the incarnation, for reasons outlined earlier in the chapter – I just part ways with him because in my view the natural kind that can’t be taken on is that of ‘human’ – not ‘physical object’. Van Horn also says that if kind-essentialism is true, then physicalists alone (and not their dualist rivals) face difficulties. He says that Merricks is mistaken in arguing that ‘human soul’ is a natural kind and to then deem that dualists, too, face worries regarding a divine being ‘becoming’ a human soul. He asks:

Why think that human soul is a natural kind? Merricks does not claim that the corresponding physical kind is human body. Rather, it is the very general physical object. What prevents the dualist from constructing the relevant natural kind as immaterial object or, perhaps better, immaterial substance? In any case, the dualist…will deny that human soul is a natural kind. A human soul is just a soul embodied in a human body. Since that soul could be embodied in non-human bodies as well, there is no more a human soul natural kind than there is a Chinese soul or philosophy professor soul natural kind. Perhaps rational soul is a natural kind, but since the second person of the Trinity is already a member of this kind, there is

25 I think that Van Horn shouldn’t be so quick here, because I explained in section 2.3 that dualists still face the challenge of (KE). They must be able to account for how we might ‘become’ a member of another natural kind, given that if kind-essentialism is true our kind membership ought to be essential. I offered a response to this worry in section 2.4.
no barrier to his becoming a human soul, as Merricks claims. Dualism therefore has no problem with kind-essentialism, while physicalism obviously does (2010: 338).

In section 2, however, I argued that the dualist can be home and dry even without Van Horn’s qualification here – even if she’s sympathetic to the idea that ‘human soul’ is a natural kind, she can argue that it’s possible to belong to this kind accidentally, and without possession of any of the modal properties normally required for being a human soul. Unfortunately for Van Horn, the physicalist can make similar use of Sharpe’s argument here. She can endorse kind-essentialism when qualified to mean that the Son essentially possesses all of the properties required for membership of the (super)natural kind ‘divine,’ and maintain that He can also accidentally belong to the kind ‘human’ – or, in line with Merricks, ‘physical object’. That is, she can revise (KE) into (KE 2), and opt for (DOMINANT KINDS) instead of (KINDS). The Son (non-dominantly and accidentally) belongs to the natural kind ‘human’ or ‘physical object’ in virtue of the concrete nature that He assumes when (freely and contingently) transforming into a human body. In being this human body, the Son just is fully human, and can also take on the requisite properties for being human – and as such, possesses the abstract property of human nature. Whether this human can possess any requisite divine properties (notable examples being omnipotence and omniscience) is, I’ve mentioned, a worry that I’ll respond to in Chapter 4.

(5) CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined various responses to the problems that kind-essentialism poses to temporalist accounts of the incarnation – specifically, to transformationalist accounts. Morris rejects (KE), so thinks that there’s no contradiction in the Son becoming human. He embraces (KINDS), but sidesteps it by arguing that many properties that appear essential for membership of the kind ‘human’ aren’t in fact so. Sharpe adapts both (KE) and (KINDS) into (DOMINANT KINDS). Merricks rejects (KE), and proposes a physicalist account of the incarnation whereby the Son assumes a
specific, concrete human nature by transforming into a body. He maintains that the jump from a dualist to a physicalist incarnation is a miniscule step – and that the real commitment lies in accepting that the divine became human \textit{at all}. I’ve argued that braiding together the strengths and insights of these various accounts enables us to have a clear understanding of how a temporal God might transform into a human – how the Word might ‘become’ flesh.

As a caveat, I’m not maintaining that the combination of these various elements is strictly necessary and sufficient for our understanding a temporal God becoming incarnate. My aim was more modest – suggesting a provisional way (which I believe to be promising), for a temporal God to ‘become’ human. I’m confident that if one is hostile to, for instance, Sharpe’s revision of kind-essentialism, one could drop this commitment and would still be able to produce another viable account of the Son transforming into a human. I also mentioned that one is free to reject kind-essentialism altogether – and then one won’t even face the problems that I’ve dealt with here. I wanted to assume what I view as the biggest obstacles to transformationalist accounts (kind-essentialism and physicalism) in order to produce the strongest case possible, and to be maximally charitable to opponents of temporalism. I’ve argued that temporalists do have the resources to uphold kind-essentialism – \textit{and}, if they so wish, physicalism about human beings.

The residual issue for temporalists is explaining how the divine ‘mental’ (or at least, non-physical) properties – such as omnipotence and omniscience – can be possessed by the human Jesus. More broadly, temporalists must be able to explain how Jesus is ‘fully divine’. This will be addressed in Chapter 4, where I'll argue that omniscience and omnipotence \textit{can’t} be possessed by a human. This isn’t detrimental for temporalists, however, because they have available kenoticist models of the incarnation, according to which the Son (whilst incarnate) isn’t omniscient or omnipotent. Prior to this, though, I turn back to divine timelessness, and to an examination of how atemporalists can deal with the alleged incoherence between divine and human properties.
PART II) FULLY DIVINE, FULLY HUMAN, ONE PERSON

The character of each nature is preserved and comes together in one person and one hypostasis, not divided or torn into two persons but one and the same Son and only-begotten God…Lord Jesus Christ (Norris (ed.) 1980: 159).

‘Will it not follow that Jesus was omniscient, omnipotent, necessarily existent…as well as being an itinerant Jewish preacher? And is this not outlandish to the greatest possible degree? Did the bouncing baby boy of Mary and Joseph direct the workings of the cosmos from his crib? Was this admittedly remarkable man as he sat by a well or under a fig tree, actually omnipresent in all of creation? Did this carpenter’s son exist necessarily?’ (Hick 1989: 70).

According to the Chalcedonian ‘definition’ of the incarnation, Christ incarnate must possess two natures, one divine and one human; yet these natures must be sufficiently united such that He qualifies as one single person. Christ’s divine nature is important because He really was the Son of God. The Son humbled himself by taking on human form – and so His genuine human nature must also be preserved in this union. We’ve seen that Christ’s humanity is important for the belief that the rest of humankind can achieve salvation. Christ’s humbling sacrifice on the cross and ascension into Heaven was what made this possible for everybody else. Due to the supposed vast gulf between divine properties and human properties, however, it’s proved extremely difficult to produce coherent metaphysical accounts that unite these two starkly opposing natures into just one individual. How can the same individual be
both omniscient, and, at the same time, limited in knowledge? How can an omnipotent creator take the form of a vulnerable infant?

This apparent incompatibility of the divine and human natures is often called the ‘incoherence problem’ (Hill 2011: 3), and appears to be in danger of violating the law of non-contradiction. It’s often referred to as ‘paradoxical’ (Evans 2002: 272), as well as ‘utterly staggering’ (Torrance 1969: 52), because of the difficulty of providing a metaphysical account of how these two natures can count as belonging to just one person in a way that doesn’t entail a contradiction. David Werther remarks that if the two natures (divine and human) really are incompatible, ‘then Jesus could no more have fulfilled the conditions of the Chalcedonian account than he could have been a spherical cube’ (http://www.iep.utm.edu/incarnat/).

Senor asks ‘why should we think that the infinite divine nature would be compatible in a single individual with the puny, metaphysically wispy nature of humanity?’ (2011: 88). The word ‘infinite’ here can be read as either referring to an atemporal, timeless God, or to a temporal, everlasting God. This part of my thesis investigates whether and how atemporalists and temporalists, respectively, can respond to this incoherence problem. In Chapter 3, I examine the strongest account that atemporalists have available, but argue that it’s unsuccessful because there’s no orthodox path available for it to carve out between two heresies. Ultimately, the atemporalist account therefore ends up falling prey to unorthodoxy. I conclude that atemporalists can’t provide a satisfactory response to the incoherence problem. In Chapter 4, I argue that temporalism is able to successfully avoid the incoherence problem, but only if temporalists adopt a kenotic account of the incarnation. I consider, and respond to, potential replies to this argument.
CHAPTER 3
INCOHERENCE PROBLEM:
ATEMPORALIST ‘SOLUTIONS’

At first glance, the incoherence problem seems to be particularly problematic for atemporalists, because they seem to face an added problem: they must account for how a God with a timeless divine nature lived a temporal life in the form of Jesus Christ. That is, on top of the alleged incoherence between the Son’s divine and human natures (such as being omniscient versus being limited in knowledge), atemporalists must also maintain that Christ’s divine nature is timeless, yet His human nature (which must be wholly preserved) is temporal, experiencing sequence and enduring various events with the passage of time. Temporalists don’t initially appear to face this extra problem, because for them the Son’s divine and human natures are both temporal. C. S. Lewis nevertheless endorses the view that God can be both timelessly eternal, and, in the form of Christ, live a temporally sequenced life. He says:

You cannot fit Christ’s earthly life in Palestine into any time-relations with His life as God beyond all space and time. It is really, I suggest, a timeless truth about God that human nature, and the human experience of weakness and sleep and ignorance, are somehow included in His whole divine life (1952: 169).

This chapter examines how the atemporalist can account for the presence of these earthly and heavenly natures in the person of Christ.¹ I argued in Chapter 1 that if God is atemporal, models of the incarnation that

¹ A discussion about the timeless truth that the Son is human, specifically, will also resurface in Chapter 5, when I consider on what grounds the timeless exalted Son can be said to be ‘fully human’ in spite of no longer being related to the human part(s) of the composite.
postulate the Son changing into either a human mind, a human body, or a combination of the two, simply can’t get off the ground. These are transformationalist models, and I argued that they’re non-starters if God is timeless, because if He were to undergo (intrinsic) change from being a divine, incorporeal entity into being a corporeal human body (or human mind or combination of the two), this would evidently take place at a time, and so would mean that His life is sequenced. Having thus discounted transformationalist options for the atemporalist, the remainder of this chapter will focus on the alternative: compositionalist models.

I argued that compositionalist models remain on the table for the atemporalist because they allow her to appeal to extrinsic change in the Son when He became incarnate. In this chapter, I examine specifically the ‘hierarchy of natures’ model (Marmodoro & Hill 2010: 469), which I claim is the best option that atemporalists have available. I outline how atemporalists have used reduplicative strategies to attempt to dispel the incoherence problem, in conjunction with a hierarchy of natures model. In this process, I concede that atemporalists don’t face an additional incoherence in light of the Son’s divine nature being timeless, and His human nature being temporal. I proceed to criticise the atemporalist model on the grounds that it can’t dispel any of the other incoherences generated by the presence of these two natures in one single person – such as the one person that is Christ being omniscient and limited in knowledge. I firstly explain how atemporalist responses to the incoherence problem unacceptably inflate their position into Nestorian heresy, whereby there are two persons in Christ. I argue that attempts from atemporalists to avoid this, however, collapse their position into Apollinarian heresy, which is where Christ is denied a human mind. I conclude that atemporalists are unable to avoid the charge of incoherence.

In broad strokes, compositionalist models of the incarnation are those according to which ‘Christ is a compound of qualitatively and numerically different constituents: a divine mind, a human body, and, on some models, a human mind as well’ (Marmodoro & Hill 2010: 469). My concern here is only with those models that do feature a human mind, otherwise called ‘three parter’ compositionalist models. There are several different versions of this model, but I’ll be discussing the one that preserves the closest unity between the
components of Christ (and so the most likely to avoid Nestorianism), and the one that atemporalists most commonly defend (because it allows that the Son doesn’t undergo change in the incarnation). In focusing on this model, I’m confident that I’m being maximally charitable to the atemporalist. The model in question has been called the ‘hierarchy of natures’ model (ibid.: 479), where on the incarnation the divine mind is related to the compound of a human mind and body. The human mind is related to the body in the ordinary way, and these are jointly related to the divine mind of God the Son.\(^2\) We therefore have three ‘parts’ in the incarnate Christ: the timeless God the Son (GS), a human mind or soul (S), and a human body (B).\(^3\) It’s important to note that the human body and soul don’t become a part of the Son, for this would require Him to change. Rather, the Son is \textit{timelessly} part of a partly temporal whole (Leftow 2002: 293) in a way that requires no intrinsic change. Instead, I argued in Chapter 1 that intrinsic change takes place in reality itself, when B+S come into existence. By virtue of this, the Son Himself undergoes an \textit{extrinsic} change, which can be argued to constitute His becoming incarnate. I’ll now discuss how the hierarchy of natures model is alleged to avoid the incoherence problem. The attempted solution utilises reduplication of the parts of the composite Christ, a move which I’ll now explain and analyse.

\begin{center}
(1) REDUPLICATIVE STRATEGIES AND THE ‘EXTRA’ PROBLEM OF ATEMPORALITY
\end{center}

Both Leftow (ibid: 273-299) and Stump (2002: 197-218) have argued for the hierarchy of natures model. They argue that the incoherence problem only appears to be an issue because we predicate the contradictory properties of Christ in the \textit{same respect} (ibid.: 218). However, Christ incarnate has two natures, and so he can possess some properties with respect to one nature and others with respect to the other nature. Leftow and Stump’s strategies

\(^2\) By ‘ordinary way’ here, I mean that the Son’s human mind relates to His body in the same way that our minds relate to our bodies. I want to leave it an open question exactly what this relation is, so that one can plug in one’s preferred account of persons. I think that the physicalist \textit{could}, if they so wished, claim to endorse this third part of the composite (the mind), but accept that the mental in some way supervenes on the physical.

\(^3\) For the sake of my argument, nothing hinges upon my using of the terms ‘soul’ and ‘mind’ interchangeably.
therefore appeal to reduplication of the parts of Christ. Leftow draws an analogy with apples; they ‘are red because their skins are – that is, because their parts include red skins. Nothing else about an apple makes it red; peel off the skin, and what is left is no longer red’ (2002: 288). We thus say that apples are red, and there’s no contradiction with their being white inside, because we know that whiteness and redness are true of the apple in different respects. Making a similar move, we can say that ‘Christ died \textit{qua} human, but not \textit{qua} divine’ (ibid.), to use Leftow’s initial example. This allows us to block the problematic inference that Christ both did and didn’t die; these properties are ascribed in different respects by being predicated of different parts of the composite, and their conflicting ascriptions to the whole composite is allegedly blocked. Likewise, atemporalists could claim that Christ incarnate is omnipotent \textit{qua} divine nature, and limited in power \textit{qua} human nature. Importantly for our purposes, it could be argued that Christ is timeless \textit{qua} GS, but temporal \textit{qua} B+S, and contradiction is (supposedly) avoided.

Bearing this strategy in mind, I’ll firstly examine whether the incoherence problem does indeed present an added difficulty (on top of the other incoherences) for atemporalists in that they must reconcile the Son’s timelessness with B+S’s temporality, which temporalists wouldn’t need to account for. Douglas Blount argues that this isn’t the case, because if (as we’ll see) there are various attempts to affirm that Christ \textit{can} possess both a property and its negation without entailing a contradiction, the very same move can be made regarding the properties of temporality and timelessness. Blount says ‘if Christian temporalists can reasonably affirm God’s omnipotence, omniscience, and spacelessness despite such arguments, I see no reason for thinking that Christian atemporalists cannot reasonably affirm the doctrine of divine timelessness’ (2002: 242). By ‘such arguments’ here, Blount is talking about those that derive an unwelcome conclusion about the Son by inference from aspects of Christ’s life. Here’s his example in the case of spacelessness:

(1) Jesus Christ is in Nazareth and not in Jerusalem.
(2) So, local predicates apply to Jesus Christ.
(3) Jesus Christ = God the Son.
(4) So, local predicates apply to God the Son.
(5) Local predicates don’t apply to spaceless beings
Conclusion: So, God the Son isn’t spaceless (ibid.: 241).

Similarly, then, here’s how a parallel argument might run in the case of atemporality:

(1) Jesus Christ was a carpenter before He began His ministry
(2) So, temporal predicates apply to Jesus Christ
(3) Jesus Christ = God the Son.
(4) So, temporal predicates apply to God the Son.
(5) Temporal predicates don’t apply to atemporal beings
Conclusion: God the Son isn’t atemporal.

There have been various responses (as we’ll see) to arguments such as these: for example, by denying (3) and maintaining that Jesus and God the Son aren’t numerically identical.4 One can also (as demonstrated above) appeal to reduplication of parts of the divine composite, and argue that the Son is spaceless and timeless qua divine nature, but spatially and temporally located qua incarnate human nature. This would be to deny (4), because no local or temporal predicates would apply to the Son Himself – only to His human nature. Blount therefore argues that this apparent contradiction between the Son being both spaceless and not spaceless, or omniscient and lacking in knowledge, is resolvable in the same way in the case of God’s timelessness. This would mean that atemporalists can maintain that GS is timeless, and any apparent contradiction with Christ being temporal wouldn’t be an issue.

Of course, there remains the objection that atemporalists now have one more contradiction to resolve than temporalists, because the latter don’t have to respond to the apparent incoherence between GS being outside of time and Christ being temporal. However, I think that temporalists would face a similar contradiction in relation to God’s temporality, caused by Mullins’ first two conditions of temporality that I outlined in the introduction. This is that a temporal God (just like an atemporal one) exists ‘without beginning’ and

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4 This move is made in particular by compositionalists, because the composite Christ includes the additional part B+S.
‘without end’ (2016: xvi). For a temporal God, existing without beginning or end is understood as being backwardly and forwardly everlasting through time. Such a contradiction, I submit, also generates an argument parallel to the ones discussed above. For instance:

(1) Jesus Christ was born in 4 BC.
(2) So, there was a time when Jesus Christ didn’t exist.
(3) Jesus Christ = God the Son
(4) So, there was a time when God the Son didn’t exist.
(5) Temporally everlasting beings have always existed

Conclusion: God the Son isn’t temporally everlasting.

The atemporalist could therefore argue that the incarnation doesn’t pose an added problem for advocates of divine timelessness, because temporalists must respond to equally many apparent contradictions in Christ’s attributes. Presumably, all of these problematic conclusions (that GS isn’t spaceless, or (for atemporalists) timeless, or (for temporalists) temporally everlasting) are on equal footing because they can all be resolved using reduplication of parts.

However, Senor argues that atemporalists can’t get around the particular problem of God’s timelessness in the way that we can with spacelessness, due to an important asymmetry between timelessness and spacelessness. He says:

A being that exists at a particular time will always be such that it existed at a time and so temporal predicates will apply to it. Thus, if Christ was ever temporal, temporal he remains… spacelessness doesn’t share this rigidity…there is nothing even apparently incoherent in the idea of an aspatial being’s becoming spatial and then returning to spacelessness (1990: 155).⁵

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⁵ Senor is perhaps being too quick in making this very strong claim. If an aspatial being were to become spatial, we’d certainly need a convincing account (perhaps a causal one) arguing that this was indeed the same entity. Nevertheless, for our purposes his criticism (that it looks extremely difficult to demonstrate how an atemporal being might become temporal and then return to genuine atemporality) still stands.
If God is ever temporal, therefore, He can’t return to atemporality in the way that a spatial being can arguably become aspatial. However, to the extent that Senor’s distinction between timelessness and spacelessness works, it can also be drawn between temporality and spacelessness. That is, if God ever has a beginning in time, then He cannot return to being backwardly everlasting. Furthermore, while Senor’s response might work for transformationalist accounts of the incarnation where GS changes intrinsically in order to become human, I don’t think it can be alleged against atemporalist compositionists of Leftow and Stump’s sort, because on these accounts the Son doesn’t transform into anything when He becomes temporal or spatial; He merely acquires temporal and spatial parts.6 As Leftow says, he becomes part of a ‘partly temporal whole’ (2002: 299). He’s temporal qua human part, but remains (i.e. simply is) timeless qua divine part.

Granting, therefore, that the incoherence problem doesn’t pose any particular problem for (compositionalist) atemporalists, we must still examine in more detail the atemporalist account of how incoherence is avoided. I’ve outlined the reduplicative strategy adopted by Stump and Leftow, which prevents us from ascribing a property and its contradiction to the composite as a whole. However, sometimes we may want to argue that one of the pair of contradictory properties does transfer to the whole. For instance, apples are red: ‘it would be pointless pedantry to say, “the apple itself isn’t red, only the skin is, the flesh within is quite a different colour”’ (Le Poidevin 2009a: 173). Le Poidevin queries whether some properties ‘trump’ others in their being ascribed to the whole, and gives the example that ‘Hermione is intelligent by virtue of her brain, but not by virtue of her nose’ (ibid.). Here, we don’t say that Hermione is intelligent qua her brain and not intelligent qua her nose; we say that she’s intelligent, period. However, the qua move can’t help us to decide which (if any) property transfers to the composite whole. Leftow is aware of this difficulty: he submits that ‘Christologists and students of apples must work things out case by case’ (2002: 290).

Given this admission, how do we know whether certain properties ‘trump’ others in the case of Christ incarnate? It’s here that rivals of

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6 The word ‘acquires’ ought of course to be read in a non-temporal sense here.
compositionalist accounts have applied pressure. For instance, Senor argues that:

To say that these property pairs will have to be worked out one at a time is to say that the qua move does not, in fact, give us any general help in resolving the logical difficulties of the incarnation…Whether [the composite Christ] borrows the particular divine property or the particular human property will not be resolved by the use of reduplicative sentences. Yet this is precisely where we need help and precisely where the qua move was supposed to be useful (2007a: 66).

We might want to argue that apples are red *simpliciter*, but the *qua* move is of no use here. It’s only from experience that we know to call the whole apple red. Similarly, we may want to know whether the composite Christ is temporal or timeless, or (say) omnipotent or limited in power, but again the ‘*qua* move’ only informs us that Christ is temporal and limited in power *qua* human nature, and timeless and omnipotent *qua* divine nature. Senor’s argument is therefore that the reduplication of parts move doesn’t tell us which (if any) of the contradictory properties applies to the whole.

This is supported by Hill, who says that reduplication only works at a *linguistic* level, but doesn’t extend to reality: ‘it does not tell us *how* or *why* Christ avoids having inconsistent properties’ (2011: 6). Of course, given that the incarnation is a unique event, it would be a rather tall order to cite examples of other entities which are both temporal and atemporal, depending upon which of their parts we’re speaking about. Nevertheless, with regards to providing a metaphysical account of how an atemporal God can be incarnate within time, a compositional account doesn’t look so appealing, because the reduplicative strategy fails to resolve the incoherence problem at any satisfactory explanatory level.

Leftow responds to Senor’s allegation by arguing that the *qua* move isn’t *supposed* to give us any help in deciding which properties apply to the whole *simpliciter*. Rather, it’s only supposed to resolve the contradiction that results from predicating a property and its negation of the very same subject. Leftow argues that, because the *qua* move succeeds in ‘[blocking] the move
from ‘S qua N is P’ to ‘S is P [simpliciter]’ (2011a: 316), this is all that’s needed to stop us from positing the contradiction that something is both P and not P. The compositionalist could therefore argue that the *qua* move achieves its purpose of avoiding incoherence by blocking our ascriptions of contradictory properties to the whole *simpliciter*. For instance, the composite Christ isn’t omniscient but is omniscient *qua* divine, and limited in knowledge *qua* human, because these properties are manifested in Christ’s divine and human *parts*, not in Christ *simpliciter*. However, whilst we might grant that the *qua* move does save the atemporalist from having to say that a whole is both P and not P, I agree with Senor that we’re still left to consider what the whole *itself* might be. There’s the possibility that one of these properties might apply *simpliciter* to the whole, and the *qua* move won’t be of any help in working out which this is.

Nevertheless, perhaps the atemporalist compositionalist can in fact say more. Stump offers an account of property *borrowing* to explain how properties of parts *can* indeed transfer to the whole, whilst allegedly avoiding incoherence. She writes that the composite Christ borrows the property of being limited in power from His human nature, and the property of omnipotence from His divine nature, and ‘because the incompatible properties are borrowed properties, Christ doesn’t have them in the same respect’ (2002: 214). Stump therefore argues that we can avoid contradiction if we ‘segregate the incompatible properties into different constituents of the whole and to attribute them to the whole *derivatively*’ (ibid.: 217, my italics). This move can be further supported with an argument by Don Cupitt, who argues that if there wasn’t *some degree* of separation between Christ’s divine and human natures ‘then Christianity would slide into a soggy pantheism merging God into the world and the world into God’ (1979: 17), since we’d no longer be able to distinguish the divine from the created aspects of the universe. Stump could therefore argue that it’s necessary to insulate Christ’s natures to some degree, and the result would be the whole composite borrowing properties from its distinct parts, given that they’re separated.

I think that Stump is attempting to have her cake and eat it here. I grant, in line with Cupitt, that there must be some degree of separation between the two natures, but when it comes to applying particular properties to the whole, they either would or wouldn’t apply, *period*. By keeping the
properties sufficiently insulated from the composite as a whole by predicing them only in a derivative way, Stump hopes to avoid the incoherence problem. This strategy could perhaps be seen as a ‘second level’ reduplicative move, because it doesn’t say that Christ is omniscient *qua* divine nature and limited in knowledge *qua* human nature, but rather that He’s *derivatively* omniscient *qua* divine nature, and *derivatively* limited in knowledge *qua* human nature. However, as Senor recognises,

I have parts that are microscopic. But I’m not microscopic. I have parts that are transparent, boneless, and amoeba-shaped, but I’m none of these things in any sense at all. Adopting the view that all properties had by parts are had ‘in some respect’ by the whole is therefore a road best not taken (2007a: 64).

Senor is here arguing that Stump attempts to insulate the contradictory properties in a way that prevents the incoherence problem. However, when it comes to deciding on the properties had by the whole, either the properties must be had to a degree ‘so small as to be insignificant’ (ibid.) — or indeed, not possessed *at all*, such as my being transparent — or otherwise the property is indeed had by the whole *simpliciter*. For example, if I cut my leg, I’m not bleeding ‘only derivatively’, I’m bleeding; period. This links back to Le Poidevin’s earlier argument that it would be ‘pointless pedantry’ for one to insist something like ‘this apple is *only* red derivatively, because of its skin; you mustn’t forget that nothing beneath it is red’!

Moreover, if we do dispense with Stump’s problematic property insulation and attribute the properties of both parts to the whole *simpliciter*, the incoherence problem rears its head once again and we’re back to where we started. We appear to be violating the law of non-contradiction once more. It’s

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7 Senor is arguably employing a far too narrow sense of parthood by speaking only about material parts of an organism, and indeed examining non-material ‘parthood’ might help us to understand what Stump has in mind. For instance, there’s a sense in which I might say that ‘music is a significant part of who I am’, but this doesn’t mean that music is everything that I am, or that music is insignificantly part of me. However, I think that this more metaphorical utterance is most sensibly understood as my saying something like ‘I love music, period’. The disanalogy remains, therefore, because it can’t be argued that Jesus Christ is omnipotent, *period*, nor that His omnipotence is had in such a small sense that it’s insignificant.
for reasons such as this that Morris argues that ‘the reduplicative form of predication accomplishes nothing except for muddying the waters, since in the end the contradiction stands of x being characterised as both N and not N’ (1986: 48–9). If we don’t sufficiently insulate the properties, or predicate them of the whole derivatively, ‘in virtue of’ their being properties of parts, it seems that we’re still (unacceptably) ascribing them both to the whole. However, if we do insulate them into ‘watertight compartments’ (Werther: http://www.iep.utm.edu/incarnat/), we have an altogether different problem on our hands. We’re now in danger of fracturing the unity of Christ and proposing two distinct entities in the composite, which makes us stray dangerously close to committing Nestorian heresy. This will be the topic of my next section.

(2) INFLATING INTO NESTORIANISM

Atemporalist compositionalists maintain that GS is a person, and that He’s timelessly incarnate. The option isn’t open to them to adopt the sort of compositionalist account where He acquires a human body and soul as parts of Himself, because this would involve fundamental change and so bring Him into time. Rather, atemporalists must maintain that GS and S+B are parts of a larger whole; and that this composite is Christ incarnate. If we attempt to ‘insulate’ the divine and human natures so as to avoid the incoherence problem (or simply to fully preserve them in line with Chalcedon), it seems that we’re now in danger of predicating two people as Christ. After all, B+S would normally be sufficient to compose a human being, and we must maintain that GS is a person. Therefore, it’s starting to seem as though atemporalist compositionalists are guilty of Nestorian heresy, because both GS and B+S are candidates for personhood. Crisp says that:

By insisting on a metaphysical cleavage between God the Son and the human nature of Christ (i.e. denying God the Son is identical to Christ or identical to His human nature), [the hierarchy of natures] model implies that there are two entities present in the incarnation: one
divine, the other human. Yet this appears to be straightforwardly Nestorian (2011: 50).

Importantly, Crisp hints at another candidate for personhood when he mentions denying that God the Son ‘is identical to Christ or identical to His human nature’. The composite Christ is itself another candidate for personhood. This is linked to what Marmodoro and Hill dub ‘the homunculus problem’ (2010: 483); ‘if Christ is a composite, containing (in addition to the divine mind) a human mind and body, which co-operate with the divine mind, then the human mind-body composite itself seems to be a person a ‘smaller person’ or homunculus within Christ’ (ibid.). The homunculus problem refers specifically to the conflict of personhood between the ‘larger’ GS+B+S and the ‘smaller’ B+S.

In light of these confusions, it emerges that we have three candidates for who exactly the person of Christ is. We have GS, we have the composite Christ (GS+B+S), and we have human parts B+S. This would certainly be Nestorianism if all three were the case, so the atemporalist must be able to respond to this allegation. I’ll consider some responses to these allegations, but show that ultimately they don’t let atemporalists off the hook.

Leftow’s response (2002: 281-2) to the homunculus problem uses an example borrowed from Peter Geach: that of Tibbles the cat, who is seated on a mat. If he were to lose a hair, he’d still be a cat. If he were to lose a different hair, again he’d still be a cat who enjoys sitting on mats. If he were (sadly) to lose an ear, he’d still be a cat. All of these proper parts of Tibbles minus one hair or ear must already be cats, because we don’t want to suppose that plucking a hair would generate a new cat. So, it seems that ‘everybody wants to be a cat’, and we now have many cats all sitting on the mat at once, which is of course an unwelcome inference. Leftow concludes from this that ‘given a set of parts composing at time t a member of a natural kind (e.g. cat), no subset of that set composes at t a member of the same natural kind’ (ibid.: 282). This links to the view that nothing can be identical to a proper part of itself, which also makes Leftow’s argument consistent with Leibniz’s Law, whereby if two objects are to be identical (and hence only one object), they must have all of their properties in common. GS+B+S can’t be identical with any of its parts,
because the composite possesses different properties (such as more parts) than any one of the parts alone. Moreover, if GS+B+S composes a member of a natural kind (a person), then no subset of this set does so, so no parts of the composite can be *any* person. Leftow would argue that even if Tibbles minus an ear *would* on his own be a cat, he’s not when he’s a member of the larger Tibbles. Similarly, though S+B would ordinarily compose a person, it’s instead part of the ‘larger’ person; the composite Christ.

I’m not convinced by Leftow’s argument, on the grounds that it doesn’t explain *why* persons can’t have persons as parts. Mullins comments that:

> I find this strategy to be lacking. It does not explain how a human soul and body that thinks, feels and acts is not a person. It just asserts that this is not a person in the case of the incarnation (2016: 168, footnote).

That is, Leftow is leaning on the Tibbles analogy to simply state that persons can’t have persons as parts, but in fact we require an independent story as to why this is.

It could be responded that the wills of Christ’s divine and human parts are united in performing the actions of the single person that is the composite, and it’s *this* that guarantees there is only one person. Marmodoro and Hill consider that what unites the human and divine natures into one person in the way that, say, a master and slave *aren’t* one person, might be that ‘they jointly perform a single action’ (2010: 481). Following John of Damascus, they suggest that in ordinary human action two operations are involved (from the body and mind), yet it’s one action that is performed. Similarly, in the case of Christ, distinct operations are performed by the divine mind and the human B +S, but ‘every action he performs is a single action’ (ibid.: 482). The atemporalist could therefore maintain that *this* is what unites GS and B+S, which together form the actions of the ‘larger’ (and so, according to the Tibbles argument, *only*) person that’s GS+B+S.

The combined strength of these replies is the most charitable counter-argument that I can suggest from atemporalist compositionists, but nonetheless I don’t think that it succeeds. Cross expresses a worry about the
divine and human minds both causing the same action to be performed. He says that if GS performs a particular human action of Christ, then the human mind can’t also perform this same action, or we’d have causal over-determination, because the action ‘appears to be sufficiently causally explained by the presence of merely one causal origin’ (2002: 218). Whilst this worry may not be fatal for the atemporalist, she must still either deny this over-determination, or demonstrate why it’s not problematic.

The atemporalist must also deal with the trickier issue of who exactly the person of Christ is. If, as Leftow says, no subset of the composite can be of the same natural kind as the composite, then it seems that the composite Christ itself must compose the person (thus blocking the ‘homunculus’ B+S). However, even granting Leftow (and Tibbles) that B+S doesn’t compose a distinct person, we evidently do want to maintain that GS is a person in line with orthodoxy, and also that He’s not identical to the composite Christ with its temporal additions. Senor writes that:

Since a whole can never have itself as a proper part, GS can’t be identical to [the composite]. This, together with the orthodox assumption that we cannot deny the personhood of GS, entails that either Christ Incarnate is a person distinct from GS, or else Christ Incarnate is an impersonal conglomerate (2007a: 56).

We’re Nestorians if we argue that the incarnate Christ is a distinct person from God the Son, or, if we deny this (and maintain that it’s GS that is the only person in the incarnation), the composite itself looks worryingly impersonal. The former horn of this dilemma must be avoided on pain of heresy, and I’ll now argue that the latter horn brings with it problems of its own.

Crisp calls the latter the ‘no person objection’ and asks who the person is that, for example, weeps at Lazarus’ grave (2011: 51). He determines that it can’t be GS, because (due to being timeless) He must be sufficiently insulated from the changes that His human nature undergoes, and is also impassible, so can’t undergo suffering (ibid.). Hill expresses a related worry when he claims that GS is too insulated from the acting and reacting human part of Christ to be the person who is incarnate. He says that:
It appears to follow…that the person who walked and talked in Galilee was not the divine Son at all. He was…a part of the composite Christ, which also has the Son as another part, in which case Jesus wasn’t the Son at all (2011: 18-19).

It seems that Hill would endorse the view that $B+S$ is the subject of the weeping when he says that the person who walked in Galilee was ‘part of the composite Christ, which also has the Son as another part’. However, I think that $B+S$ can’t be the person who weeps, because then (along with GS) we have two persons in Christ. Crisp would also argue that the *composite* Christ equally can’t be the person who weeps at Lazarus’ grave. He says:

Christ is just the mereological sum of God the Son and his human nature. And it certainly cannot be that Christ’s human nature is a person on pain of Nestorianism…but then it appears that no person is the subject of the weeping. And this is surely theologically intolerable (2011: 51).

It therefore seems that GS is (on pain of unorthodoxy) the only candidate for personhood – but we’ve seen that a timeless GS looks unable to perform the actions that we attribute to the person of Christ. It seems that atemporalist compositionalists can’t account for (a timeless) GS *being* the person that is Christ incarnate, because He’s too insulated from performing the actions that are attributed to Christ. However, we equally can’t deny that GS is a person, because this would be unorthodox, so we have a tension here. It initially seems that Leftow wants to ascribe personhood to the composite GS+$B+S$, because this would be in line with his Tibbles analogy where a ‘larger’ member of a natural kind can’t have a member of the same natural kind as a part. However, this would be to deny personhood to the ‘part’ GS, which I’ve just explained is unorthodox. As Crisp recognises, it also can’t be that $B+S$ is the person of Christ, because this would be Nestorian as we’d also need to maintain that there’s a divine person in the composite, too.
We’re therefore left very confused as to *who* and *what* Jesus Christ is, and I think this has a lot to do with our account being a compositional one, since we have different ‘parts’ of the composite, as well as the composite itself, that are all candidates for personhood. This difficulty wouldn’t arise were our account to be transformationalist and the Son to simply ‘change into’ the person Jesus, rather than having extra parts ‘tacked on’ by virtue of an extrinsic change.

However, I’ve already explained why atemporalists can’t help themselves to transformationalist accounts. Davis argues that ‘the orthodox doctrine claims that God became man, not that…God and man somehow combined’ (1983: 124). This problematic ‘combining’ is exactly what does happen on an atemporalist compositionalist account, though, and we can see how it creates difficulties for who exactly the person of Christ is. Hill adds that ‘a caterpillar that sits on the back of a butterfly does not thereby become a butterfly itself – in order to become a butterfly it must be transformed into one’ (2011: 15). In attempting to avoid the frying pan of Nestorianism, we’ve now landed in the fire of the ‘no person’ objection.

Leftow might respond by maintaining that GS is the only person in the incarnation, yet reject the idea that this makes the composite impersonal. He says in his earlier paper that the person who is (the composite) Jesus Christ is God the Son, but *not* in the sense that the two are numerically identical (2002: 294), thus denying that the composite is identical with a person. Rather, he says that GS ‘is’ Jesus Christ in the sense of being His ‘psychological core, the ultimate determiner of his attitudes and actions’ (ibid.). This response would enable Leftow to maintain that the Son is timeless, because He’s not identical with something that has a temporal part. Rather, He ‘has atemporally the attribute of being part of a partly temporal whole’ (ibid.). Leftow also affirms this in a later paper, where he replies to Senor’s above allegation: ‘though I have argued that GS+B+S is personal, there is no person with which it is identical’ (2011a: 321). He even admits that he ought not to have named the composite (GS+B+S) ‘Jesus Christ’, because this (mistakenly) leads us to think that it’s a person, when in fact we should reserve the name ‘Jesus Christ’ only for GS.
However, if GS is the only person in the composite, then it seems that Christ’s human mind (S) is redundant, which is verging on Apollinarianism. Nevertheless, Leftow does seem to be maintaining that it’s GS that is the only person in the incarnation. Secondly, therefore, it now seems that the ‘Tibbles’ analogy in his earlier paper is misdirected, because he doesn’t need to evade the homunculus problem if the ‘larger’ composite isn’t in fact a person at all. He’d need another argument, however, to prove that B+S is not a distinct person; he can’t appeal to Tibbles because he’s of course denying that the composite is itself a member of the natural kind ‘person’.\(^8\) He also can’t appeal to Tibbles because on the hierarchy of natures model that we’re working with, B+S doesn’t become a part, or ‘homunculus’ of GS – it simply joins with GS.

I think that Leftow has such an argument available. In a different paper, he says that ‘S’ is specifically GS’s human soul; so there is no other individual that B+S could possibly form except for the composite Christ. He says that ‘S could not exist unless GS were incarnate in a composite including it’ (2011b: 30), meaning that S could only have existed as the human soul or mind of one person; the individual Jesus Christ whose psychological core is God the Son.

Assuming that Leftow successfully avoids Nestorianism and the ‘no person’ objection, we’re now left wondering what work B+S actually does in the incarnation, if the Son, being Christ’s ‘psychological core’ and the ‘ultimate determiner’ of his actions, is the person who is Christ.\(^9\) The human mind of the composite is now starting to look problematically redundant, which is verging dangerously on the heresy of Apollinarianism. I’ll next examine whether and how atemporalist compositionists can respond to this charge.

(3) COLLAPSING INTO APOLLINARIANISM

Le Poidevin remarks that the difficulty with maintaining that the Son is identical with Christ is that ‘the human part of the composite is entirely extraneous to the person of Christ’ (2011: 213). I think this argument has force

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\(^8\) Leftow is assuming, of course, that ‘person’ is a natural kind.

\(^9\) Leftow’s success at avoiding these aforementioned objections is questionable, but I’m going to grant it for the purposes of the next section in order to be maximally charitable to the atemporalist.
even if we grant Leftow that the relation between Christ and GS isn’t the stronger one of identity but rather GS being (more weakly) the core of Christ, because GS is still determining Christ’s actions and attitudes, which seems to leave no substantial role for the human mind (or, indeed, the human body).

It might be responded by the atemporalist compositionalist that she’s not neglecting the Son’s human body or mind, because of the role that they play in enabling the timeless Son to manoeuvre in space and time. His human body enables Him to be visible and to move around the earth, and His human mind enables Him to experience thoughts that can’t be predicated of Him *qua* divine, such as feeling tempted. Leftow draws an analogy with scuba gear to illustrate this. He writes:

> Scuba gear is intimately connected to the diver’s body. Yet it keeps the diver disconnected from the water it touches: scuba gear lets one swim without getting one’s feet wet. B+S is the Son’s environment suit, letting him manoeuvre in time and yet stay dry (2002: 292).

So, just as scuba gear keeps the diver dry and disconnected from water, so B+S is the Son’s ‘environment suit’ that lets him act in time, whilst remaining timeless Himself. The atemporalist could therefore adopt this argument to deny that B + S is redundant in the composite Christ.

I don’t think that the scuba gear analogy is very appealing, however, because surely S+B is more than a mere ‘environment suit’. Whilst it’s important for preserving God’s timelessness that, indeed, He be ‘disconnected’ from time, what’s important for the incarnation is that Jesus walked amongst us and talked with us, and events in his life are temporally extended as ours are. This is supported by Cupitt, who says that ‘the human Jesus is not supposed to be a glove-puppet with the hand of God inside it. He is supposed to be fully human, with human thoughts, feelings and volitions’ (1979: 8). There seems to be a tension here, and I think that we’d want to say more about the Son acting in time than that He ‘swam without getting wet’. Rather, we want to say that He wholly participated in temporally extended events, such as healing the sick and suffering on the cross. This latter event is particularly important, because in the incarnation the Son really (temporally) endured His crucifixion as a
sacrifice for us and, I’d argue, to say that He merely experienced this in a
disconnected way, all the way ‘staying dry’ from duration and temporal passage
isn’t to fully respect and understand the extent of the suffering involved in
God’s sacrifice.

Nevertheless, it might be responded that it’s only Christ’s human body
that’s used as a tool, and this is no different from how we use our own bodies.
Christ’s human mind, however, has a far more important role to play. It’s
more than a mere tool, because it experiences the important human emotions
that we ascribe to Christ, such as feeling tempted (Matthew 4: 1-11). These
emotions are integral to the sacrifice of the incarnation, and thus Christ’s
human mind indeed plays a fundamental role.

I grant that the above is a persuasive argument for evading Apollinarian
heresy; except that we’ve now returned to the problem of our two isolated,
‘watertight’ natures in a single person – so we’re now back on the unorthodox
road to Nestorianism. This is because if Christ feels truly tempted, then He
must be unaware of His divine, impassible nature, because there must be a
genuine epistemic possibility of His yielding to temptation. In order to truly
account for the sacrifice of the incarnation, and to avoid Apollinarianism by
upholding the importance of Christ’s humanity, we must argue that Christ was
prone to feeling, for instance, genuine temptation, suffering and desertion
through his human mind. This then exemplifies the gulf between the (timeless,
impassible) divine nature and the (temporal, susceptible-to-suffering) human
nature, and suggests that there are indeed two persons in the composite; one
who suffers and one who doesn’t.

It could be responded, in line with Crisp, that the Son can’t be wholly
unaffected by the changes that take place in B+S, meaning that GS isn’t as
insulated as we might think. Crisp asks:

Do we want to concede that God the Son does no action that Christ is
reported as doing in the canonical Gospels? Do we want to concede
that he has none of the properties that Christ has? That seems like
rather too much for an orthodox christologist to swallow (2011: 50-1).

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10 This claim could be made of Christ’s human’s mind whether or not that one thinks it’s
ultimately reducible to, or supervenient on, His physical body, I submit.
If the Son merely timelessly knows everything that B+S does, but doesn’t participate in any of these actions, a further problem is also waiting in the wings; that of the Son having the same relationship with B+S as He does with every other human. David Brown says that if ‘God knows all human experience in any case through his omniscience, [then] the relationship viewed at least from the divine nature, would be no different in kind from its relationship with any other human nature’ (1985: 264). The atemporalist compositionalist therefore needs to concede, in line with Crisp, that the Son must be affected in some way by His union with the B+S, lest He be unacceptably insulated from the other parts of the composite in a way that threatens to make GS’s relation to the human part(s) of the composite the same as His relation with every human. This sameness of relations would be problematic because the incarnation would fail to be the unique and miraculous event that it’s widely considered to be.

It could be responded that in order to see how the incarnation is different from God merely knowing the contents of every human mind, we can distinguish between propositional and experiential knowledge. God possesses perfect propositional knowledge, and so knows the truth value of every proposition. He knows that I like dogs and Harry Potter novels, and about my contemplation of His knowledge of this fact, for instance.\(^{11}\) He can therefore be deemed omniscient, for He knows every propositional truth. However, God has incomplete experiential knowledge in that He doesn’t know exactly what it’s like to be me, or to be a dog, for instance.\(^{12}\) However, due to the incarnation, He does know exactly what it’s like to be a human; Jesus – for He experiences the world as that very human. This has the added upshot that the incarnation brings God closer to His creation through His coming to know our human condition. An analogy might be drawn with Mary the colour scientist leaving her black and white room (Jackson 1982: 127-136): the Son possessed all propositional knowledge of His creation in the room, just as Mary did of

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\(^{11}\) There’s no reason why this propositional knowledge can’t be tenseless, and possessed from a timeless standpoint.

\(^{12}\) Even if one thinks that God does know what it’s like to be every one of His creatures, I’d still maintain that He doesn’t know exactly what it is to be any of them. I’d maintain in line with Linda Zagzebski that even if God has ‘perfect total empathy’ (2008: 242) of all our conscious states, He’s nevertheless aware that this is a ‘copy’ of the experiencer’s conscious state (ibid.).
colour. On becoming incarnate, though, the Son came to know exactly what it’s like to be human – by virtue of being a human – just as on leaving the room Mary knows what it’s like to see colour. It could therefore be argued that this *experiential* knowledge of being Jesus (but not literally being any of us) is what individuates the incarnation, and what prevents the Son from being incarnate in all of us. This endorsement of the Son acquiring experiential knowledge upon becoming incarnate will come to be important later on in this thesis – most notably, in Chapters 6 and 8.

However, this response only works (or at least, only has force) if one abandons one’s belief in a timeless God. Only temporalists can account for God’s experiential knowledge *changing* with the incarnation in the way described above, because atemporalists must maintain that God timelessly possesses all knowledge, so it would be impossible to supplement this at a later time. It therefore seems that in this sense a temporalist can provide a better account of the *point* of the incarnation, because she alone can account for God adding to His perfect propositional knowledge the experiential knowledge of what it’s like to be human. I therefore close off this line of argument to the atemporalist, who must maintain that God’s knowledge doesn’t change.

I think Leftow would answer the above challenge by arguing that it’s the *causal relations* between GS and B+S that make the incarnation of Christ distinct from GS’s relation with other humans. Leftow argues that a timeless God can still have causal relations with temporal entities, and provides the example of His creating and sustaining the universe (2002: 288). He notes, however, that ‘just what’ (ibid.: 299) the causal relations are between GS and B+S is too large a topic to broach. We’re therefore left wondering *what exactly* these timeless causal relations between GS and B+S are, and how they might be distinct from GS’s causal relations with other beings. They must be such that B+S is active as more than just an ‘environment suit’ on pain of Apollinarianism, but they must keep GS from being a wholly isolated part of the composite lest we return to Nestorianism.

Moreover, even granting Leftow that we *can* provide a credible account of these causal relations between the timeless divine and temporal human parts of the composite, the atemporalist still faces another problem. This is that if

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13 And, indeed, Eutycheanism – the heresy whereby Christ’s possesses just a divine nature.
Christ’s divine and human consciousness are indeed parts of the same person, it must be possible that they be co-experienced. Swinburne says that in order for Christ to be one person, there must be at least a possibility for the person to co-experience the contents of His divine and His human consciousnesses (2011: 160, footnote). Swinburne acknowledges that the Son may have chosen to keep the two separate, but it must be at least possible for them both to be experienced together. ‘If it isn’t’, says Swinburne, ‘I’m lost as to what it means to say that both consciousnesses belong to one person’ (ibid.). Importantly, he then adds that if this co-experience is to take place, it must happen at a time.

He says:

Now consider some temporal experience of Christ at a moment $t$ during his human life. Is [the Son] even able to co-experience that experience together with some experience of his divine consciousness? An answer ‘Yes’ is not possible, since $t$ is not a moment simultaneous with any moment in the timeless divine consciousness’ (ibid.).

Simultaneity is itself a temporal relation, and therefore not one that the consciousness of a timeless God the Son can exist in. Our attempt to avoid Apollinarianism has therefore returned us full circle to Nestorianism, because it seems very difficult to provide an adequate account of how the consciousnesses of a timeless GS and a temporal B+S can unite to form a single person. The two consciousnesses are unacceptably separate such that they seem to belong to two people. Indeed, Smith argues that there’s ‘no coherent via media between Apollinarianism and Nestorianism’ (1977: 267), because any attempt at finding a ‘middle ground’ ends up giving way to one of these heresies. I venture that this is certainly the case for atemporal compositionalism.
In this chapter, I’ve explored whether and how atemporalists can avoid the incoherence problem, by examining how they attempt to respond to the apparent paradox of the timeless Son, complete with the traditional divine attributes, entering into time as a meek and vulnerable baby. I granted that, if atemporalists adopt the ‘hierarchy of natures’ compositionalist account, they’re able to respond to the additional contradiction of God being both timeless and temporal. However, I then claimed that any attempts to avoid the incoherence problem in general only cause the atemporalist to be guilty of unorthodoxy in a different way.

I argued that the atemporalist compositionalist ‘solution’ to the incoherence problem either inflates the model into Nestorianism, or collapses it into Apollinarianism, and there’s no coherent path between these problematic outcomes. Employing reduplication of parts of the composite Christ inflates His divine and human natures into distinct persons. Any attempts to deny this lead to worries regarding who exactly the person of Christ is. These seem best resolved by maintaining that GS is the only person in the composite, but this stance in turn deflates the atemporalist position into Apollinarian heresy. The problem with the atemporalist compositionalist response to Apollinarian heresy is that on the one hand, it keeps GS too ‘dry’ and isolated from the worldly temporal activities of Christ. We’ve already seen that this leads us back to Nestorianism, and so must be avoided. On the other hand, attempting to avoid Apollinarian heresy leads the compositionalist to a temporal GS, who directly participates in worldly activities. An investigation of the coherence of this account will be the topic of my next chapter: I’ll consider whether belief in a temporal God can provide a better response to the incoherence problem.
CHAPTER 4
INCOHERENCE PROBLEM: TEMPORALIST SOLUTIONS

I argued in the previous chapter that temporalists face (equally) as many ‘contradictions’ as atemporalists in light of the incoherence problem. This is because where atemporalists must be able to account for God the Son being timeless in spite of Christ being a temporal being, so temporalists must reconcile the Son’s being backwardly everlasting with the conflicting property of Christ being born of the Virgin Mary, and thus having a beginning in time.

In this chapter, I examine whether temporalists can provide a coherent account of how it is that Christ has two distinct natures that are united into just one person. Temporalists appear in a better position than their rivals, because they can argue that the Son did change in the incarnation, meaning that they have more options up their sleeve when responding to the charge of incoherence.

There are several different metaphysical models that have been adopted by temporalists. I first outline (section 1.1) Morris’s ‘two minds’ view, together with Swinburne’s ‘divided mind’ account. Section 1.2 outlines (and dispels) some prima facie worries that might be had regarding these accounts. One interpretation of Morris and Swinburne’s views seems to me to be as a temporalist compositionalist account (where the divine and human minds are ‘parts’ of Christ). I examine such models in section 1.3, arguing that in spite of arguments to the contrary, these models don’t succeed in solving the incoherence problem. Section 1.4 turns to what I consider the alternative way to model these accounts: as transformationalist. More specifically, I consider ‘inclusionist’ construals of Christ’s two minds, whereby one ‘contains’ the other. Such a model of the two minds view also fails, I argue – most notably because it leads to Apollinarian heresy. I finally turn to another species of transformationalism: a kenotic model of the incarnation. Section 2 argues that
kenoticism is (unlike all other models) successful at avoiding the incoherence problem.

(1) TWO MINDS

(1.1) THE ACCOUNTS

Swinburne’s ‘divided mind’ and Morris’s ‘two minds’ accounts are remarkably similar, so they can usefully be scrutinised together. I’ll therefore assess them as two versions of the same view. At junctures where they do differ, I of course note this, and treat the accounts distinctly in order to be maximally charitable to each of them.

Swinburne’s ‘divided mind’ account postulates the divine mind splitting at the moment of the incarnation, thus giving way to a human stream of consciousness, or ‘belief-system’, in addition to the divine stream of consciousness. The divine stream continues to be omniscient and omnipotent, as well as to possess all of the other requisites for divinity. The human stream is fallible and limited in power, and unaware that it’s at all divine. Swinburne stresses that, for the divine Son:

The separation of the belief-systems would be a voluntary act, knowledge of which was part of the divine knowledge-system but not of the human knowledge-system. We thus get a picture of a divine consciousness and a human consciousness of God Incarnate, the former including the latter, but not conversely (1994: 202).

Swinburne is here detailing an important accessing relation between the two belief systems; the divine one (being omniscient) knows all of the contents of the human belief-system, whereas this isn’t the case vice versa, given that the human belief-system is limited in knowledge and is unaware that it’s divine.

To support his argument, Swinburne draws upon Freud’s findings that ‘an agent can have two systems of belief to some extent independent of each other. In performing some actions, the agent is acting on one system of belief and not guided by beliefs in the other system; and conversely’ (ibid.: 201).
Swinburne suggests the example of a mother who denies that her son has died, yet in other respects her unconscious beliefs may guide her to behave as though he has died, such as by throwing away some of his belongings (ibid.). Similarly, in the incarnation, the Son’s human belief-system may behave as though a fallible mortal, stating ignorance of various things and experiencing bodily limitations such as thirst and hunger. The belief-system is wholly unconscious of the divine belief-system, yet sometimes it may unknowingly act through the latter. Swinburne acknowledges that the accessing relation between the belief-systems isn’t entirely one way: he grants that there are occasional times in which the human belief-system has access to the divine one. He says that ‘some penetration on Earth [is needed]…some access by Christ incarnate to divine knowledge and power in order that he should reveal it to us’ (1989: 60-70). Examples of such a situation could be when Jesus performed miracles.

It seems to me that Swinburne’s divided mind account can work exclusively for a temporal God, because the divine mind ‘voluntarily’ decides to split into two belief-systems. There must therefore be a time before, and a time after, this decision by the divine mind: it’s surely a process that needs to be broken down into temporal parts. In addition, there’s no doubt that the divine mind (and so, GS) undergoes fundamental change when it splits into two belief systems, because it develops a branch that’s a human stream of consciousness, which it didn’t possess before. Hill argues along these lines that Swinburne’s account can’t be appealed to by atemporalists, because of the transformation involved by the Son: ‘this could not happen if the Son does not change, which again presupposes that the Son is temporal’ (2012: 25). Understood in such a way, therefore, this divided mind account seems to be a transformationalist model of the incarnation, which will be discussed in section 1.4.1

Conversely, Morris’s ‘two minds’ model doesn’t seem to be restricted exclusively to a temporal God. On this account, there are two distinct minds; the divine mind with its omniscient consciousness, and the earthly, fallible mind that is ‘thoroughly human, Jewish and first-century Palestinian in nature’ (1989: 121). Morris, presenting his view as an alternative preferable to kenoticism, speaks of an ‘asymmetric accessing relation between the two minds’

1 I’ll shortly discuss (in this section) the fact that it’s somewhat confusing whether two minds accounts are to be classified as compositionalist, transformationalist, or something in between.
(1986: 103), meaning that the divine mind enjoys full and unlimited access to the contents of the human one, whereas (like Swinburne) the human mind has ‘only such access [to the divine mind], on occasion, as the divine mind allowed it to have’ (ibid.). Morris stresses that his account has an advantage over kenoticism, because it can account for the Son humbling Himself through a taking on of properties, rather than a giving up. This ‘giving up’ of properties is central to kenoticism, as I’ll explain in the next section. Morris says that ‘[the Son’s] humbling consisted rather in his rendering himself vulnerable to the pains…and agonies which became his as a man but which, in his exclusively divine form of existence, could not have touched him’ (ibid.: 104). Therefore, Morris argues that his view can account for just as much of a sacrifice on the Son’s part as kenoticism, but without the (allegedly) problematic need to give up any essential aspects of divinity.

Morris offers several analogies to illustrate his account, including one of lucid dreaming, where the dreamer is in a particular scenario with different characters. He says that:

The dreamer himself is one of those characters, perceiving the internal environs of the dream and taking part in its action ‘from within’. But at the same time, the dreamer ‘as sleeper’ is somehow aware, in what could be called an overarching, lucid level of consciousness, that it is just a dream that is going on, in which he is playing a role as one of the characters (ibid.: 105).

Similarly, the Son qua human mind is participating in an earthly life, interacting with other humans, whereas qua divine mind He’s aware of an ‘overarching’ level of His divine existence as the Son of God. Morris draws other analogies with multiple personality disorder, and brain hemisphere commissurotomy, where there are two ‘distinct domains of experience’ (ibid.) operating, which are analogous to the two minds.

I think Morris’s model could work with both a temporal and an atemporal God. It’s consistent with a timeless God since the divine mind needn’t change intrinsically upon the addition of the human mind because, contra Swinburne’s model, the divine mind doesn’t split or change: it’s rather
joined by a human mind. Morris’s model also admits of a temporal God because the divine mind could, like the human one, experience sequential ordering, if one wished this for one’s account. It could also be maintained that the divine mind changes upon the incarnation and throughout it, because its knowledge changes to encompass the mutable experiences of the human mind, and it (freely) changes to occasionally allow the human mind access to it.

There has been some confusion regarding whether Morris and Swinburne’s accounts are to be classified as transformationalist or compositionalist. Hill classifies Swinburne’s account as ‘partly transformationalist and partly relational’ (2011: 10). This is because the Son really does intrinsically change, or ‘transform’ into a human mind, but He also becomes related to a human body and soul. However, in the same paper, Hill characterises relational models as explaining the incarnation ‘wholly’ in terms of acquisition (of a human body and perhaps also a human mind) (ibid.). If this is the case, then Swinburne’s model seems prohibited from counting as compositionalist, given that it also involves a transformation. Indeed, in this very same paper, Hill describes Morris and Swinburne as non-compositionalists (ibid.: 14). In a more recent paper, Hill calls Swinburne’s model a ‘Son-body’ account of the incarnation (2012: 15), categorising it as a third kind of model of the incarnation, in addition to transformationalism and compositionalism.

I think that it’s possible to construe Morris and Swinburne’s models as either transformationalist or compositionalist. We can, on the one hand, imagine the minds as two distinct parts of the incarnate Christ: which would be a compositionalist model. This seems to be the case particularly because the tradition among compositionalists here is to use the term ‘part’ in a ‘philosophically rather loose sense’ (Maromoro & Hill 2010: 487, footnote). Likewise, Leftow classifies Morris and Swinburne’s accounts as ‘three parter’ models of the incarnation (2002: 287), suggesting that he views each of the two minds (together with a human body) as ‘parts’ of Christ. Especially because

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2 ‘Relational’ is understood here as a model of the incarnation whereby the Son enters ‘…into a kind of relationship…with something that would have been a human being had it not been in such a relationship’ (Hill 2011: 10). Compositionalist models are classified as one type of relational model of the incarnation.
we’re speaking loosely about parts here, I fail to see what these two minds can be if not parts, when we consider them in this ‘side by side’ sense.

Alternatively, however, we can imagine one of the minds included within the other. Tim Bayne calls the latter ‘inclusion’ (2001: 125) models of the incarnation. I think that such inclusion models have to be transformationalist, because one mind must evidently change intrinsically in order to truly include the other. Inclusion models will be assessed in due course. I think that these really are our only options for conceiving of the two minds account: either one mind is included within (or part of) the other, or else the two minds are distinct. I think that the former are inclusionist (and so, transformationalist) and the latter are better viewed as compositionalist models of the incarnation. Hill seems to say something similar when he considers what might be the case if the human mind (or stream of consciousness) isn’t part of the divine one:

Perhaps [the human mind] is ‘hosted’ by the human body…or perhaps it is distinct from both the divine mind and the human body…but in both of these cases…we are now envisaging that Christ consists of the Son plus a human body plus a human mind, and that is compositionalism (2012: 26).³

I fail to see how atemporal two minds models are anything other than compositionalist models, because I don’t see how the minds can be anything other than distinct, ‘side by side’ parts. At the very least, I think that the burden of proof rests with the two minds theorist to tell us what else, besides ‘parts’ (in some sense) these two minds are, especially because I’ve explained that compositionalists tend to understand these parts in a quite loose sense of the term.⁴ I discussed the strongest atemporal compositionalist model in Chapter 3. I don’t think we can have inclusion in this case, because this would involve a change in the divine mind: it would have to change at a time in order to include

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³ Hill thinks that to go compositionalist in this way is to depart from Swinburne’s account of the incarnation (ibid.). However, I would argue that construing the divine and human minds as ‘parts’ of Christ incarnate is just one way to model Swinburne’s account – the other being inclusion.

⁴ Le Poidevin comments that the two minds account ‘looks like’ a version of compositionalism (2009b: 709), but then proceeds to say that the minds aren’t ‘parts’ of Christ. He doesn’t say why, however, and I think that the two minds theorist owes us such an explanation.
a human mind. Moreover, I find it hard to grasp the concept of something atemporal containing something temporal, because the atemporal ‘container’ would have to be mutable in order to accommodate the ever-changing contents of the human mind. Relatedly, Bayne says on the subject of an atemporal inclusionist model, ‘the prospects for such a marriage being a happy one seem dim’ (2001: 127). This is because of the problems we can imagine with a synchronic consciousness containing a diachronic consciousness (ibid.). I think that the burden of proof here rests with the two minds theorist if she wishes to deny this, because I can’t imagine what else these two distinct minds can be other than parts, for the atemporalist. I’ll therefore assume that the atemporalist two minds model has been dealt with in the above chapter, and so argued to be unfit for solving the incoherence problem. This section will discuss only temporalist variants of the two minds model (which incidentally do admit of inclusion).

Morris and Swinburne’s accounts both admit of two distinct ‘belief-systems’ in the incarnate Christ (whether minds or streams of consciousness), and they both maintain that Christ remains one person in spite of this. For ease of argument, I’ll henceforth refer to these belief-systems as ‘minds’, but my argument will encompass both accounts. However, where the argument may hinge upon the belief-systems being mere streams of consciousness as opposed to more ‘full-blooded’ minds (or vice versa), I’ll flag this up and treat the two accounts differently. A further similarity, then, is that both accounts argue that the divine mind has unrestricted access to the human mind, whereas the human mind has only occasional access to the divine one, when the divine mind permits it. They also both argue that the acquiring of the human mind (whether or not this takes place through a ‘splitting’ of sorts) is a voluntary act on the part of the Son.

Morris and Swinburne argue that it’s in virtue of these two minds that Christ incarnate can be both truly divine and truly human, and yet remain one person. We can employ reduplication to make sense of the seemingly contradictory properties, saying, for example, that Jesus Christ is omniscient qua divine mind, but limited in knowledge qua His human mind. In Chapter 3,

5 Assuming, of course, that we can even draw such a distinction between a stream of consciousness and a mind.
I noted many of the problems that come with reduplication, such as that it gives way to Nestorian heresy, and that it doesn’t help us to decide which properties transfer to Christ as a whole. This aside, I’ll now explore the metaphysics of the two minds view in its own right, to ensure that I’m being as charitable as possible to this position. After outlining, and dismissing, some prima facie worries for the account, I’ll argue that once we start to tease out how the two minds are alleged to solve the incoherence problem, we find that a compositionalist two minds model renders the minds in danger of being so distinct that they’re more akin to people. This would be Nestorian heresy, however. Alternatively, if we maintain that (through the inclusion model) one mind can ‘contain’ the other in spite of their conflicting contents, we must be able to point to who exactly the person of Christ is, and what He knows. I’ll demonstrate that, of the three possible answers to this predicament, one restates the problem, one leads to Apollinarian heresy, and one (unacceptably) ascribes false beliefs and ignorance to Christ’s divine mind.

(1.2) SOME PRIMA FACIE WORRIES

A preliminary worry is that Morris isn’t clear about how the human mind is connected to the divine one, which suggests that his account struggles to get off the ground. On Swinburne’s account, the human belief-system is caused by the divine mind voluntarily deciding to split into two belief-systems, so the two systems belong to the same mind, which helps with linking the two causally.6 This is supported by Leftow: ‘one person’s having first one mind and then two, the second branching off from the first psychologically, is in fact a legitimate description of what goes on in cases of cerebral commissurotomy’ (2002: 286). For Morris, the human mind can’t be backwardly everlasting, because Jesus’s human stream of consciousness only began when He was born as a man. Perhaps, then, we can argue that the Son, as part of His ‘taking on’ sacrifice, causes the human mind to come into existence, which takes place when the man Jesus is born in Bethlehem. However, the problem with this is that if the human mind is so distinct from the divine one, we imagine it just

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6Even this splitting of belief-systems doesn’t get off the ground easily, though. If the divine mind decides to split, it must be in control of the splitting, and if it’s aware all the while of both belief-systems belonging to the same person, doubts are raised as to whether we really have two distinct belief-systems at all. This argument will be developed shortly.
coming to exist in the way that the mind of any human baby does; with no connection to the divine one. It’s limited in knowledge and doesn’t know that it’s divine, and so there would be no psychological continuity between the minds.\textsuperscript{7} Granted, God may \textit{cause} the human mind to exist, so there’s causal connection in this sense, but this is surely no different from the way that any human mind is caused to exist. This additionally seems to detract from the \textit{uniqueness} of the incarnation, in that we’re \textit{all} created by God and the contents of \textit{all} our minds are fully accessible by God.

Morris might respond by claiming that the incarnation is a unique event because ‘the earthly mind is contained in the divine mind in a distinctive way’ \citep[1986: 161]{Morris}. By this, he means that the human mind was not ‘endowed with a set of personal cognitive and causal powers distinct from the cognitive and causal powers of God the Son’ \citep[ibid.]{Morris}. Whilst the rest of us \textit{do} possess these distinct wills and volitions, those of the Son’s human mind are no different from those of His divine mind, according to Morris.\textsuperscript{8} This unique relation of containment could also be what grants the human mind the occasional access to its divine counterpart – a further feat that sets the incarnation apart from generic cases of human minds being accessible to God. This alludes to an inclusion model of the two minds account, because the human mind can be ‘included’ within the divine mind in a way that our minds aren’t.

However, this ‘containment’ of the human mind within the divine one is a troublesome concept to grasp. It can’t be a material sense of inclusion given that (I assume) at least one of the minds isn’t corporeal, and so can’t \textit{physically} contain or be contained. If it’s merely ‘epistemological’ inclusion in the sense that the \textit{contents} of the human mind are known by the divine mind, then this once again seems no different from the way that God knows the contents of \textit{all} of our minds. Perhaps we can invoke a ‘non-physical’ sense of containment to do the trick – such as, for instance, the way we speak of a

\textsuperscript{7} There are numerous examples of people lacking psychological continuity (such as after suffering brain damage or being in a coma), and yet we don’t typically want to deny that they are the same person. Arguably, however, much of the appeal of these cases is that there remains \textit{bodily} continuity, which we don’t have in the incarnation.

\textsuperscript{8} This raises associated problems regarding the \textit{freedom} of the human mind, which will be discussed below.
scene being contained within a play. Alternatively, perhaps we should simply state that one mind contains the other in a ‘metaphysical’ sense that one mind is a part of the other (Le Poidevin 2009a: 186, footnote). The confusion regarding these interpretations of ‘containment’ certainly suggests a lack of clarity, but perhaps we can additionally grant the two minds theorist this unique (albeit occasional) ‘accessing relation’ in the incarnation, whereby the human mind is granted access to the divine one. Whatever this ‘accessing relation’ might be, it’s something that the Son’s human mind has to the divine mind only on occasion, and which our human minds are never granted. It could thus be argued that it’s this occasional accessing relation that sets the incarnation apart as a unique relation between God the Son and His human mind.

Having outlined these preliminary worries and granted that they’re not devastating, I’ll move to discussing whether and how two minds accounts can provide a coherent account of how the incarnate Christ remains one person. I’ll discuss compositionalist and transformationalist two minds strategies respectively. I’ll argue that both fail, and that we should thus abandon our attempts to model the incarnation using two minds accounts.

(1.3) COMPOSITIONALIST TWO MINDS MODELS

The temporal two minds view has the capacity to allow for more integration between the minds than its atemporal counterpart, given that on the former construal the divine mind can respond to the human mind in a more satisfying way. Moreover, the divine mind can adapt to the changes of the human mind. A temporal divine mind can itself change to know the ever-changing contents of the mutable human mind. A temporal two minds model is therefore, I suggest, prima facie more appealing than Leftow’s atemporalist compositionalist account, where the divine mind is immutable and so can’t be well-integrated with the temporal human mind. Nevertheless, I’ll demonstrate

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9 This interpretation has the bonus of implying that the Son’s human life is a temporal aspect of His overall divine life, which is therefore consistent with a temporal rendering of the incarnation.

10 Morris’s choice of this phrase is difficult to grasp. What does it mean to say that the divine mind has ‘access’ to the human mind? Perhaps, in order to explain it, we must appeal again to the human mind’s inclusion within the divine one. This worryingly suggests that we can only explain the terms ‘inclusion’ and ‘accessing relation’ in terms of each other.
that a temporal construal of the two minds account ultimately still falls foul of Nestorian (and other) heresies.

Compositionalist readings of the two minds model invite us to construe the minds existing as distinct, ‘side by side’ parts, particularly when contrasted with inclusion models where the human mind is (somehow) contained by the divine mind. The latter accounts would surely involve intrinsic change to the divine mind, and to this extent they belong to the transformationalist family, I venture. Swinburne’s account seems to have an initial advantage over Morris’s, given that one mind is divided. That is, it seems far easier to equate Morris’s two separate minds (compared with Swinburne’s two belief systems of the same mind) with persons, at least initially. Morris’s account thus seems more susceptible to Nestorianism. However, I think that even though Christ’s mind is ultimately one on Swinburne’s account, it’s extremely difficult to retain any sense of the unity between the two streams of consciousness. The main reason for this is that the human mind is (for the significant majority of the time) completely unaware that the divine mind even exists, let alone what it’s thinking. This degree of separation in my opinion makes the two belief-systems too distinct to be part of the same individual. Moreover, the belief systems in Swinburne’s model differ in character in the same way that Morris’s minds do: one is omniscient and the other fallible, for instance. I think that differences such as these are too stark for us to accept without question that the minds (or belief-systems) belong to the same individual.

However, Morris would respond that we can avoid Nestorianism by distinguishing between being merely human, and being fully human. He says:

It may be impossible for any merely human being to have more than one mind, or range of consciousness of the sort we are considering, at the same time...so among mere humans, the individuation of two minds at any one time will suffice for the identification of two persons. But this leaves open the possibility that outside that context, there is no such one-one correlation (1986: 157).

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11 This distinction that Morris makes was outlined in detail in Chapter 2.
We don’t have any experience of what it’s like to be ‘fully’ (ibid.: 65) human in the sense that Jesus was, and so, Morris would argue, this is why we find it difficult to grasp how one person can possess two minds. We may think that possessing one, and only one, mind is essential for being human, but it could emerge that this is just a very common attribute, thus allowing for Jesus to possess two minds (or belief-systems) and still be one human individual.

However, granting Morris and Swinburne that one individual can possess two minds, there’s no denying that the content of each is vastly different, which leaves us questioning who exactly the person of Christ is. Grace Jantzen, in her review of Morris’s book, asks:

Who is the person? If the person is Jesus of Nazareth, in what sense can he appropriately be said to have a divine mind of which he is not conscious? If the person is God the Son, to what extent has he actually become incarnate if his omniscience…is preserved intact but kept inaccessible to Jesus of Nazareth? (1986: 245)

This comment harks back to the ‘no person’ objection to compositionality that I discussed in Chapter 3. Relatedly, Bayne questions who the referent of Christ’s ‘I’ thoughts is, and argues that it’s very difficult to see how all of the ‘I’ thoughts (from the different minds) can have the same referent, given the vastly different characters of the two minds (2001: 136). If there really is just one person in the incarnate Christ, we must surely be able to pick out the same overall referent of the ‘I’ thoughts at all times, because ‘consciousnesses don’t believe things, people do’ (ibid.: 137). This leaves us wondering what the one person of Christ can know. For instance, the divine mind might know the time of the parousia, whilst the human mind might be ignorant of this, but we remain unsure as to what the person of Christ believes. It seems that there are three possible answers here.

Firstly, it could be maintained that the person of Christ both knows and doesn’t know the time of the parousia. The compositionalist could generate this result by reduplication of parts in the typical way: Christ knows the time qua divine mind, but doesn’t know the time qua human mind, so it can make sense to attribute both states of knowledge to Him, in different respects.
However, if Christ is one person, we ought to be able to give a more substantial answer than this, as I argued in Chapter 3. Senor voices this worry when he says:

The two-minds view does not succeed in defeating the charge of...incoherence...since it will be true of Christ that he both knew and did not know the date of the Last Judgement. Since there is a single subject of predication, it does little good to claim that Christ was omniscient with respect to his divine nature and not omniscient with respect to his human nature (1991: 361).

I therefore rule out this option, because it seems to be inflating the composite into two persons, and so into Nestorianism. Morris himself even admits that ‘if the question is pressed concerning what the person, God the Son, himself believed...evading the question by appealing to the duality of mind can appear to threaten the unity of person, and thus the coherence of the whole picture’ (1989: 125). A compositionalist construal of the two minds model therefore ‘solves’ the incoherence problem for the price of Nestorianism, which of course we’re not willing to pay. We’re now left with two further options; that Christ doesn’t know the time of the parousia (because of His human mind not knowing), or that He knows the time of the parousia (because of His divine mind knowing this). Both of these answers lend themselves towards inclusionist construals of the two minds, because they suggest that one mind’s knowledge ‘trumps’ that of the other, which I think is best explained by inclusion in some sense. I’ll now move to discussing inclusionist models.

(1.4) INCLUSIONIST TWO MINDS MODELS

By way of reminder, inclusionist models postulate one of the minds (human or divine) ‘containing’ the other. I’ve explained that inclusionist models can’t be other than transformationalist, because to come to contain

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12 We will see below that Morris has an alternative answer available: we should say that the Son’s divine mind knows all of the beliefs of the human mind, but does not have them as its beliefs.
13 After all, if we don’t have inclusion but distinct, ‘side by side’ minds, we at least need another argument to explain how only one mind comes to be the subject of Christ’s knowledge of the parousia.
something else is to undergo intrinsic change.\textsuperscript{14} I also think that inclusion is the only alternative way to depict two minds accounts of the incarnation. Either the minds are distinct ‘parts’ of the composite, or there’s some relation of containment between them, I submit.

I’ll firstly consider the option that Christ’s ‘I’ thoughts are those belonging to His human mind, because we must allow for His being ‘truly human’ throughout the incarnation. However, Christ’s human mind possesses only limited knowledge. This would then mean His divine mind (if it’s to be a part of this very same person) must ultimately know this, and only this, information. If ‘the entire contents of [Christ’s] human consciousness can be ascribed to God the Son’ (Bayne 2001: 137), then false beliefs, such as that it’s possible for Him to sin, or that He’s unaware of the time of the parousia, must be attributed to the divine mind (ibid.: 136-7). Le Poidevin has consequential worries regarding the divine mind, given that it’s supposed to be omniscient. He says ‘if the human mind is a subset of the divine mind, how is it possible for the human mind to entertain thoughts that the divine mind knows to be false?’ (2009a: 184). The idea is that, because Christ’s human mind is included within His divine mind, then we must attribute all of the human mind’s thoughts to the divine mind. This in turn means that the divine mind can be mistaken.

Richard Sturch responds that this last answer is only a problem as long as we think in terms of an ‘inclusion’ model. He writes that the ‘I’ thoughts of the Word and Jesus refer to the same self, but neither is a subset of the other. If we avoid these thoughts of which mind is included within the other, then the Son ‘is…aware of Jesus’ feelings if he gets lost in the market, and is aware also that these are his own; but they are not themselves part of the divine consciousness in the way that these two awarenesses are’ (2003: 105). The idea is that if we imagine one mind being the overall referent of Christ’s ‘I’ thoughts, because it in some way ‘contains’ the other, we’ll be led into unnecessary problems, such as attributing false beliefs to the Son. What we ought to do, rather, is simply postulate the Son’s divine mind as being aware of what His

\textsuperscript{14} I do submit that one could draw their distinctions elsewhere (such as by postulating the two minds view as a ‘third’ category of incarnational model, as we’ve seen (above) that Hill does). However, given my investigation of God’s relation to time, I think it’s important to draw distinctions in the way that I’ve done here. That is, if a model of the incarnation involves intrinsic change, it counts as transformationalist.
human mind is thinking, knowing that these thoughts still refer to Himself, but also knowing that they’re not in any way part of its own consciousness. This is, in fact, supported by Morris himself, who says that:

The divine mind would have perfect access to the contents of the human mind and thus would know [the human belief in question] to be contained in the human mind. It just would not thereby have this belief as one of its beliefs (1986: 160, my italics).

However, I think that we’ve now returned to the unsatisfying answer generated by compositionalist models; that of Jesus both knowing and not knowing the same piece of information. Bayne insists that ‘something has to give’ (2003: 109), because ‘if Jesus was God, and Jesus had false beliefs, then God had false beliefs’ (ibid.). Moreover, we can’t cherry-pick the beliefs that we wish to ascribe to God. Bayne says that ‘orthodoxy doesn’t claim that Jesus was God the Son only on certain occasions, or in certain respects’ (2001: 138). Rather, all of the beliefs of the Son’s human mind must be ascribed to a person (because people, not minds, have beliefs), and in line with orthodoxy this can only be the person that’s God incarnate. There has to ultimately be one subject of the thinking here, and if we prise the minds back into separate, distinct ‘parts’, we’re back to the Nestorian worries that face compositionalists. It therefore seems that we’re none the wiser as to who this person of Christ is, and what exactly He knows.

We’re therefore left with a final option: that inclusion models can help us to keep Nestorianism at bay because the human mind is contained within the divine one, which helps us to imagine the human mind as included within the very same divine person of Christ incarnate. We might argue that the person of Christ knows the time of the parousia because His overarching (omniscient) divine mind knows this. Inclusionists could maintain that Christ’s divine mind is the subject of His knowledge. It has unlimited access to the human mind, (by virtue of containing it), and so can see what the fallible human mind is thinking, but also knows the overall truth: that He is the divine omniscient Son. However, this answer seems to be in danger of collapsing into the heresy of Apollinarianism, where Christ is denied a human mind. Christ is supposed to be
‘truly’ human after all, and if He knows all the while that He’s divine and omniscient, there’s no satisfactory sense in which we can argue that He did possess a human mind. It’s part of Christ’s sacrifice that He took on our limited form. This thought is summed up in a song by Sydney Carter. He says:

And if they crucified me,
I’d think that I was luckier
Than those who hung beside me.
I’d know that I should rise again
And all things would be well;
But when you are a son of man
However can you tell? (1969: 15)

For our purposes, the thought here is that if Christ’s divine mind is the referent of His ‘I’ thoughts, He’ll know all along that His crucifixion isn’t final, and won’t be in the despair that He would be in if He believed Himself to be truly human and unaware of His glorification. Brown says that this reduces the crucifixion to a ‘meaningless charade’ (1985: 253), because the divine nature (being impeccable and omniscient) doesn’t suffer on the cross, so there’s no sacrifice that takes place at all. This contention of Brown’s fits with the importance of the biblical picture of Jesus uttering the cry of dereliction whilst suffering on the cross (Mark 15:34). We’ll see later in this chapter that it also counts in favour of the kenotic view, which emphasises the importance of Christ’s genuine ignorance of His divinity if He’s to truly know our condition.

Moreover, if the subject of Christ’s ‘I’ thoughts is His divine mind, we’re also left pondering the freedom of the human mind. John Hick is particularly critical of the two minds view in this respect. He says that the account is ‘inadequately one-dimensional’ (1989: 421), because it only takes account of the noetic structures of each of the minds, but ignores their actual agency in the world (ibid.). Morris says that the volitional activity of Jesus is the volitional activity of the Son (1986: 161-2), but he’s referring only to mental activity. Hick says that this becomes more problematic when we consider the two minds and their will to act, because then it seems that ‘Jesus had no separate human will and the will operative in his life was the divine will of the
second person of the Trinity’ (2005: 56), which in turn means that He had no human agency. If Jesus’s will was nothing other than the will of the Son, then it appears that as a human He wasn’t free to act using the (limited) human faculties that he took on. Rather, He was all the while being controlled and monitored by the Son. This diminishes the sacrifice that Morris maintains is exemplified in the Son taking on a limited human nature: it’s hardly genuine if the Son never acts through His human mind. Furthermore, this detracts from the goodness and selflessness of the acts that the man Jesus performed, because it emerges that He didn’t perform these of His own human free will.

Morris has argued in response that, if we consider the human mind in itself, what’s important is that the human Jesus felt as though He was free to act on His human desires, and was unaware that the divine mind would intervene – for instance, to prevent Him from sinning. Morris says that ‘Jesus could be tempted to sin just in case it was epistemologically possible for him that he sin’ (1986: 148), despite it being metaphysically impossible that He do so. By this, he means that Jesus could feel genuinely tempted to sin through His human mind, because He was unaware that His divine mind would always intervene to prevent this. Swinburne makes the same argument in relation to his model; he says that although ‘[Christ incarnate] cannot do wrong, he may however, through not allowing himself to be aware of his divine beliefs, be inclined to believe that he may succumb to temptation to do wrong and thus…he may feel as we do’ (1994: 205).

Hick objects to these arguments, claiming that they present a ‘very strange kind of freedom’ (2005: 57) because they depend upon ignorance (1989: 422). Morris is saying we’re free if we can do anything that we think we can, but actually can’t, do, which (I agree with Hick) isn’t an acceptable sense of freedom. For example, we can imagine that, no matter how hard I try, it’s impossible for me to eat a delicious-looking piece of chocolate cake. I might think that eating the cake is possible, though, and then force myself to resist this temptation. If I were to find out that it was impossible for me to eat the cake – perhaps because some evil demon would have prevented me – then there’s definitely a sense in which I’d feel that my choice wasn’t free. This is because eating the cake was never a real option anyway, so I never had a genuine choice between two real options. I think that this is certainly an
unwelcome picture, because it limits the freedom of the human Jesus and the extent to which He underwent a sacrifice by becoming human.\textsuperscript{15}

Morris anticipates this objection, and responds that although Christ’s divine mind would have stepped in had He tried to sin, it in fact didn’t need to do so, because ‘he freely, of his own accord, decided not to succumb to temptation’ (1986: 153), and so was fully responsible for His admirable and free actions. The divine mind never needed to step in, therefore, and so it can be argued that the freedom of the human mind was in no way impinged upon.

One could add that if we’re positing (along Anselmian lines), the greatest God conceivable, then of course Jesus’s human mind didn’t require any intervention from the divine mind even in His impulses to act, because He was able to restrain Himself from giving into temptations. Ultimately, however, I’m still dissatisfied with this response because the above problem remains that there’s no genuine possibility for Christ to act in the way that He feels tempted to, so no real choice between actions. On Morris’s account, as Hick observes, those who talked with Jesus ‘were talking to a man whom God the Son was invisibly monitoring, ready to control him if he went astray’ (1989: 423).

A related problem is that if the human mind is included within the divine mind to such an extent that the former is always limited by the latter, and can’t act contrary to the latter’s desires, then there’s no sense in which we actually have two distinct minds. This is further enforced by inclusion imagery, where we imagine the human mind as a ‘subset’ of the divine one. Senor observes in relation to this that there’s a ‘terrific irony’ (2011: 95) in the two minds account failing to succeed at positing two distinct minds. Bayne says that, by positing two minds but only one centre of causal power, the two minds account ‘teeters on the edge of outright inconsistency’ (2001: 134). Senor posits a dilemma here:

Either there are two distinct sets of cognitive and causal powers, or there are not. If there are, then the unity of the incarnation is threatened

\textsuperscript{15}This argument assumes that freedom should be libertarian, and require the principle of alternative possibilities. Compatibilists could respond (in line with my account in Chapter 1) that Christ’s human mind isn’t constrained by anything external to Himself when acting, to the extent that it’s the same person as the divine Son. However, whether or not the divine Son is permitted to count as nothing external to His human mind is exactly what’s being debated in this section!
(and the heresy known as Nestorianism looms), and there is apparently...no unique relation between the human mind of Christ and the mind of God the Son. If there are not two distinct sets of powers, then it is hard to see that God incarnate had a genuine [human] mind (and the heresy known as Apollinarianism looms) (2007b: 563).

I therefore conclude that the two minds view, when teased out metaphysically, can't deal with the incoherence problem whether we adopt a compositionalist or transformationalist interpretation of it. We're left wondering what Christ actually does know, or can do, and we ought to be able to answer this if He's indeed one individual. I've already demonstrated the problems with attempts to blunt the first horn of Senor's dilemma: they ultimately leave us questioning who exactly the (one) person of Christ is, given that the contents of each of the minds differs so greatly from that of the other. I've shown that all possible answers to this question seem to be problematic, because if we do posit one subject of these 'I' thoughts (via inclusion), we end up on the one hand impinging upon the freedom of the human mind, and impaling ourselves on the second prong of Senor's dilemma. Alternatively, we impinge upon the impeccability of the divine mind, and end up ascribing problematic false beliefs to it, which is an equally unwelcome consequence.

Fortunately for temporalists, however, there's another model that comes under the umbrella of temporal 'solutions' to the incoherence problem. Kenoticism is another transformationalist model, and in the following section I'll argue that it succeeds in avoiding the incoherence problem.

(2) KENOTICISM

On this model at the Incarnation his divine powers would shrink to those of a foetus, on the Cross he would literally die with no more surviving than is the case with any other human being, and then be raised again, finally to ascend to have his full powers of deity restored to him (Brown 1985: 267).
Kenoticism is the view that, when becoming incarnate, the Son freely divested Himself of many of His divine properties such as omnipotence and omniscience in order to become fully human. It’s illustrated powerfully above by Brown, who compares the Son’s powers at the outset of the incarnation to those of a mere foetus, suggesting that the Son truly became the human baby born of Mary. Charles Gore, one of the founders of kenoticism, says that ‘for love of us He abjured the prerogatives of equality with God. By an act of deliberate self-abnegation, He so emptied Himself as to assume the permanent characteristics of the human or servile life’ (1992: 157-8). Gore seems to be emphasising the supererogatory nature of kenoticism: the Son was under no obligation to surrender His divine prerogatives, but He chose to do so due to the extent of His love for us. Defenders of this view appeal to Philippians 2:5-11, whereby the Son ‘emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man’. Interestingly, this adds a sacrifice to the incarnation: in addition to dying for our sins on the cross, Christ also sacrificed His divine properties in order to coexist as ‘one of us’.

As I’ve hinted, I don’t think that the atemporalist can help herself to kenotic accounts, because they involve intrinsic change – from possessing certain divine attributes, to deciding to divest oneself of them, to lacking them. This is only possible if God is temporal. I take this point to be relatively uncontroversial, and haven’t come across any atemporal kenotic argument. Admittedly, Hill comes close when he suggests that some ‘functional’ kenotic views might be consistent with God being timeless (2012: 6). These are where Christ incarnate remains in possession of the divine attributes such as omniscience and omnipotence, but doesn’t exercise them, like Superman not exercising his powers when He’s in the guise of Clark Kent (Crisp 2007: 140). This is as opposed to ‘ontological’ kenoticism where the Son genuinely loses the divine attributes. However, I struggle to imagine how even functional kenoticism can admit of a timeless God, because this involves Him either choosing not to use His divine powers, or perhaps not realising that He has them. The latter view seems to conflict with His omniscience anyway, because an omniscient being can’t fail to realise anything. Moreover, the former view

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16 Then, to re-gaining them upon glorification, but this aspect of kenoticism will be discussed in Chapter 6.
seems to involve a change. God has to have actively decided not to use His
divine power and knowledge, which involves a prior time in which He had full
use of these, a later time when He reconsidered this, and an even later period
during which He ceased to use His divine properties.

However, the atemporalist could argue (just as she does with other
timeless responses) that an atemporal God can timeless *programme in* failure to
exercise omnipotence and omniscience. Just as a timeless God can ensure that
on a certain date He responds to my prayer, He could also timelessly ensure
that between the dates of the incarnation, He ceases to utilise omnipotence and
omniscience. Paul Helm likens this to setting a thermostat (2001: 53): I
programme (in one act) the temporally scattered actions of the radiator, just as
God can timelessly arrange His failing to exercise omniscience, along with His
creating the universe and all divine responses.

Such an account of divine timeless ‘responses’ is of course not
uncontentious, but even granting the functional kenoticist that her account can
admit of an atemporal God, I’ll discuss this view no further.¹⁷ This is because I
don’t regard functional kenoticism as a genuine ‘emptying’ of divinity. If the
Son is simply choosing not to *exercise* certain divine properties, then He still,
fundamentally, possesses them, which makes functional kenoticism seem
somewhat of a ‘sham’, or ‘quasi’ (Forrest 2000: 127) kenotic view, as well as
detracting from the Son’s ‘humbling’ sacrifice. It would be like a world-class
chess player pretending to play badly for a game – she’d still be able to beat her
opponent, because she doesn’t actually *lack* her expert chess knowledge and
skill. This is supported by Evans, who remarks that God’s decision to share in
the human condition is a ‘costly’ one, meaning that ‘Christ does not retain
omnipotence and omniscience in reserve, so to speak, to be pulled out of the
hip pocket in case of emergency’ (2006: 199). I’ll therefore consider atemporal
kenotic accounts no further. I maintain instead that if kenotic accounts can
deliver an orthodox reading of the incarnation, this is another string only to the
*temporalist’s* bow.

There’s also the added factor that, if kenosis is only functional, Jesus
arguably won’t be sufficiently human, and so we’ll have departed from

¹⁷ For criticisms of divine timeless ‘responses’, see Wolterstorff (2001b:77) and Swinburne
orthodoxy. After all, we’ve seen the conflict that’s generated between divine and human attributes, and I’ve just argued that this is ultimately detrimental for two minds accounts. In support of this, Davis asks ‘is a person who at any time has the ability to be omnipotent but voluntarily and temporarily decides not to call on that ability ‘truly human’?’ (2006: 132). Cupitt makes a similar argument, but regarding omniscience. He says:

To become truly man, God the Son must take upon himself not just the outer but also the inner conditions of one particular time and culture. So there must be some kind of veil between the human Jesus and the omniscience of God the Son, or Jesus would not be truly human (1979: 12).[^18]

It’s for these reasons, therefore, that I’ll focus only on the ontological account of kenosis in which Christ truly lacked the divine properties in question as a result of kenosis, because I believe this to be the only candidate for a genuine self-emptying of divinity.

Having covered these preliminaries, I’ll now explain how the kenotic view is alleged to avoid the incoherence problem. Kenoticism is typically explained and debated in relation to the Son voluntarily giving up two divine attributes: omniscience and omnipotence. I’ll firstly assess the coherence of the kenotic account in relation to these two attributes. In a final section, I’ll examine a possible divestment of what have been called the ‘ungiveupable’ (Davis 2006: 119) divine attributes, such as ‘being uncreated’ and ‘existing of necessity’, in order to become human.[^19] In both sections, I’ll argue that kenoticism can make sense of the incoherence problem, and I’ll defend it from allegations to the contrary.

[^18]: In fact, Cupitt’s use of the word ‘veil’ could still allude to a form of functional kenoticism, suggesting that Christ still possesses omniscience, but that it’s merely ‘screened off’ from Him, so He’s unable to access it. However, I take Cupitt’s view to be consistent with ontological kenoticism, and to mean that the human Jesus must be truly ignorant of His divinity and in genuine possession of limited knowledge, rather than just ‘appearing’ to lack knowledge.

[^19]: By choosing this qualification, I don’t mean to assume that the attributes of omniscience and omnipotence are straightforwardly ‘give-upable’ by the Son. Indeed, this will be debated in the section. Rather, I’m treating the sets of attributes differently because there’s no alleged outright contradiction or apparent impossibility in losing omniscience or omnipotence as there is with relinquishing, for instance, necessary existence.
(2.1) OMNISCIENCE AND OMNIPOTENCE

As mentioned, kenoticists often cite Christ’s ‘self-emptying’ as described in Philippians, but there’s also other scriptural evidence that is appealed to. For instance, Gore appeals to Christ’s apparent lack of knowledge during His earthly life: ‘he expresses surprise at the…unbelief of men, and the barrenness of the fig-tree, and the slowness of His disciples’ faith. He expresses surprise on many occasions, and therefore, we must believe, really felt it’ (1992: 147). Gore also refers to Christ’s ignorance when He despaired in uttering the cry of dereliction: ‘nor is it possible that He could have cried with real meaning upon the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”’ (ibid.: 148) unless He had truly lacked knowledge of the future and of His divinity.

Defenders of kenoticism argue that the incoherence problem can be avoided because the Son (freely) divests Himself of those attributes that conflict with His true humanity and His genuine experience of our condition. On acquiring the properties essential to humanity, therefore, the Son loses some of those that are essential to divinity (Hill 2011: 17), all the while remaining wholly divine in a moral sense. Those divested divine properties most commonly discussed are omniscience and omnipotence, which it’s argued are given up in order that the Son experience limited knowledge and limited power, in line with the rest of humanity. Therefore, incoherence is avoided because there’s no contradiction whereby Jesus possesses a property and its negation. Moreover, Nestorian unorthodoxy is avoided because one person is the subject of the kenotic incarnation. In line with this, it’s maintained that a kenotically incarnate Christ could still perform miracles that we attribute to Him, just not in virtue of His omnipotence. Rather, He instead prayed for such

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20 The Scriptures are internally contradictory on matters such as whether or not Jesus lacked awareness of His own divinity. I’m not, however, saying that my argument hinges upon the cry of dereliction – I’m merely using it to motivate my argument.

21 The Chalcedonian Creed teaches that Christ incarnate was ‘like us in all things but sin’, suggesting that it was impossible for Him to commit any evil acts. We’ve seen in the previous discussion of the two minds view that this threatens the freedom of the human Jesus, because He’s only alleged to be omnibenevolent qua divine mind. This generates worries regarding the divine mind having to potentially ‘step in’ and prevent the human Jesus from succumbing to temptation. It also verges on Apollinarian heresy, threatening to collapse the two minds account into just one mind. On kenoticism, however, the human Jesus just is omnibenevolent: He’s not being controlled and potentially prevented from – for example – succumbing to temptation.
miracles (Forrest 2000: 128), and His prayers were answered with the Father's divine intervention.22

Over and above this, kenoticism has the added advantage that it depicts an incredibly selfless and loving God, and seems to attribute to Him the greatest sacrifice of all the models discussed, since He surrenders the attributes that were His divine prerogative in an act of supererogatory goodness.

However, it’s commonly objected that kenoticism doesn’t account for the orthodox requirement of Christ possessing a divine nature, because the Son gives up those properties that are essential to His divinity, such as omnipotence and omniscience. It’s because of this that Marmodoro and Hill classify kenoticism as a ‘partial set’ model of the incarnation: one in which Christ lacks some properties essential to either divinity or humanity (2008: 105) – in this case, divinity. They then criticise kenoticism on the grounds that: ‘if God must give up essential divine properties in order to be genuinely human, then it is impossible for any individual to be both genuinely divine and genuinely human’ (ibid.: 110). If the incarnate Son isn’t genuinely divine and genuinely human, however, we have strayed into unorthodoxy. Senor argues along related lines that: ‘the kenotic perspective faces an obvious, potentially devastating objection before it even leaves the proverbial gate’ (2011: 103), which is that, because some divine attributes are divested, kenoticism ‘runs the risk of denying the divinity of Christ’ (2011:104). Moreover, Swinburne argues that, because omnipotence and omniscience are often ascribed to God essentially, ‘any being who was divine would have to have the same essential properties as such a creator – otherwise he would be less than the creator source of all, and there would be no incarnation of God’ (1994: 232, my italics). Swinburne is arguing that omnipotence and omniscience are necessary to God, and so without them He’d no longer be the God of Christianity.23

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22 Relatedly, when the Son is exalted and regains omniscience and omnipotence, these are restored to Him by the Father. The alternative is that the Son Himself retained the power to regain these attributes at any moment – but of course, this wouldn’t be to have truly divested Himself of omnipotence. Marmodoro and Hill comment that ‘if the Son can be omnipotent (but chooses not to be), then it is in his power to do all the things an omnipotent being can do. But that is the same thing as being omnipotent’ (2008: 110).

23 This apparent commitment to a set of modal properties necessarily required for being ‘divine’ seems to be a variant of (KINDS), which was discussed in Chapter 2.
A further consequence of this is that the kenotic view doesn’t feature a divine sacrifice on the cross, because it’s only a human nature that suffers in the form of Jesus, rather than the Son of God Himself. This is illustrated by Brian Hebblethwaite, who compares the case of God sacrificing Himself on the cross with the thought that God merely empathises with us – which would presumably be the case if Jesus wasn’t divine:

Nor does the idea that God suffers with every sufferer...have the same moral force as the idea that God *himself* suffered on the Cross. Sympathy is an admirable quality but it is no substitute for accepting responsibility for the world’s ills by exposing oneself to them (1987: 157).

Critics therefore argue that if we want our metaphysical account of the incarnation to be of the incarnation of God, and a sacrifice on God’s part, the kenotic view won’t help us. This is because it’s extremely hard to demonstrate that the man Jesus was at all divine, if He lacked those properties considered essential to His (super)natural kind nature: that of divinity.\(^\text{24}\) It seems that problems arise because on kenoticism, such important parts of the Son’s divine nature are relinquished that it becomes hard to tell that He has become incarnate, rather than just replaced by a human. This is what Sturch seems to be arguing when he says ‘while it is possible to imagine becoming a crab in the sense of finding oneself in a crab’s body, to imagine a complete ‘kenotic’ transformation is really to imagine oneself ceasing to exist and being replaced by a crab’ (1991: 27). This is presumably because what’s fundamental to one’s nature no longer exists, in both the divine-human and human-crab kenotic incarnations.

I firstly want to note that Senor, cited above as voicing this common objection to kenoticism, *also* appeals to the Philippians passage – which is typically used to support kenoticism – as being ‘the most explicit scriptural

\(^\text{24}\) Although in Chapter 2 I was sceptical of the idea of a ‘divine’ (super)natural kind, omnipotence and omniscience are nevertheless widely held to be essential to the Christian God that I’m discussing. These attributes are therefore essential to God’s *individual* divine nature. If one agrees with me that there’s no ‘divine’ supernatural kind, therefore, one still faces a problem in needing to account for how God can relinquish properties essential to His individual divine nature. These people can therefore plug in ‘individual divine nature’ in the place of ‘divine’ nature, if they so wish.
basis for the *orthodox* two-natures view of Christ’ (1990: 156, my italics). That is, he cites the well-known passage as requiring that Christ, ‘…though he was in the form of God…emptied himself, taking the form of a servant’ (ibid.: my italics). So, whilst the most common objection to kenoticism is its unorthodox neglect of the Son’s divine nature, the biblical passage most commonly appealed to to support kenoticism claims that Christ incarnate *was* ‘in the form of God’, which is enough to convince Senor that this passage indeed provides the most ‘explicit’ support for the orthodox two-natures account of Christ. Whilst Senor’s use of this Philippians passage seems to count in favour of the orthodoxy of kenoticism, I won’t place any weight on this technicality, not least because there could be many interpretations of the phrase ‘in the form of’ God. I’ll instead outline and endorse other responses to the claim that kenoticism is unorthodox.

The typical response here is to maintain that kenoticism doesn’t require us to say that the Son gave up His essential divine attributes, for we can rethink what these essential attributes are by using the incarnation to shape our understanding of God. Crisp, when discussing Davis’s view, says ‘we should allow the doctrine of the Incarnation to inform what properties are requirements for the divine nature, rather than stipulating that God must have certain properties and then trying to make this fit with…the Incarnation’ (2007: 130). This strategy is particularly apt for my project, given that I’ve proposed the very same methodology: using the incarnation as a starting point for investigating God’s relation to time. Armed with this strategy, it’s been suggested that we should revise the thought that the *simpliciter* form of omniscience and omnipotence is essential to divinity. This option was first considered by Morris, despite his ultimately *not* adhering to kenoticism. He suggests that ‘what would be claimed, though, is that it is not precisely omniscience which is a requisite of deity. It is rather a distinct property, the property of being omniscient-unless-freely-and-temporarily-choosing-to-be-otherwise, which is a logically necessary condition of deity’ (1986: 99). On this revision, therefore, there’s no danger of the Son ceasing to be divine, because

Furthermore, this is similar to my approach in Chapter 2, where I discussed the possibility of rethinking the properties of having a *human* nature in light of the incarnation. Here, we’re rethinking the properties of the *divine* nature.

We’ve seen above that Morris prefers his ‘two minds’ account.
He retains *this* (essential) property upon His ‘free and temporary’ decision to surrender His omniscience and omnipotence. With this tweak to omnipotence and omniscience, kenoticism can be permitted to count as what Marmodoro and Hill call a ‘complete set’ model of the incarnation: one in which Christ bears *all* of the essential divine *and* human properties (2008: 105). Davis adheres to this amendment of these divine attributes, adding that:

If the claim that omnipotence simpliciter is an essential property of God is inconsistent with Jesus Christ being ‘truly human’, most Christians will be inclined to say: so much the worse for the doctrine that omnipotence simpliciter is an essential property of God (2011: 127-8).[27]

Davis is demonstrating his view that we should let the all-important doctrine of the incarnation shape our understanding of God’s nature, rather than first characterising His nature and then discovering that this hinders and confuses our impression of Christianity’s central teaching. As aforementioned, this is the approach that I’m taking in this thesis as a whole, so adopting it here is wholly consistent with my overall methodology. Similarly, Ronald J. Feenstra says when discussing kenoticism that ‘if Jesus Christ is the most direct revelation of God…then surely our understanding of what God is like seems likely to need revision in the light of what is revealed through his presence and teaching’ (2006: 162).

Readjusting the requisites for divinity also enables the kenotic account to remain orthodox. It’s been argued by some that kenoticists are straying outside the guidelines of Chalcedon by postulating the Son emptying Himself of divinity, when He should rather be ‘taking on’ humanity and (all the while) not losing anything of His divine nature. For example, Swinburne says that:

The intentions of kenotic theory are admirable – it is trying to capture the simple idea behind all vaguely orthodox theories of the Incarnation that in some way God humbled himself and lived a human life. Where

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[27] Of course, by saying ‘most Christians will be inclined to say’, Davis is referring only to his own intuition on this matter, and *assuming* that other Christians would agree with him.
it differs from Chalcedon is in supposing that that was and could be achieved by God the Son ceasing in some way to have the divine properties; the humility involved a giving up. Chalcedon, by contrast, affirms that the humility involves a taking on (1994: 233).

However, if we readjust the requisites for divinity as above, so that the Son is divine if He’s ‘omnipotent unless freely and voluntarily choosing to be otherwise’, He’s still truly divine. Therefore, in spite of the ‘admirable giving up’ involved in kenoticism, the kenoticist can maintain that she’s wholly in line with Chalcedonian orthodoxy, and that Christ remains truly divine. Moreover, if humanity is ‘taken on’ by a divine being without any sort of kenotic ‘giving up’, then it could be argued that this act is a sham, lacking any real sacrifice and collapsing into quasi-kenoticism. It would be like donning a fancy dress costume: we’ve not truly lost anything of who we are, just as God would still really be omnipotent and omniscient beneath His human disguise.

Nevertheless, it’s been retorted (and anticipated) by some that this re-shaping of the divine attributes is too much of an ‘ad hoc’, ‘cooked up’ (Evans 2002: 260), or even ‘desperate’ (Senor 1991: 361) move to be considered credible. Senor says that ‘[the kenotic theorist] alters the account by adding a caveat clause that is specific to the problem she is thereby trying to solve. But this comes perilously close to being a paradigm of an ad hoc emendation’ (2011: 105). Moreover, in response to my argument above that we’ve enriched our understanding of the divine nature by using the incarnation to shape our account, Senor rejoins that ‘learning something about divinity from the incarnation is fully appropriate, but one might have hope that what we learn would be more general or maybe even deeper than the simple addition of a caveat clause on the traditional attribute’ (ibid.: 106). The thought here appears to be that, by adding the phrase ‘unless freely and temporarily choosing to be otherwise’ to what we initially thought to be essential divine attributes, we’re qualifying the divine attributes only because it’s convenient for us.

Therefore, it appears that we’ve learned nothing new about the divine attributes, and that our reasoning is faulty. Hick is particularly sceptical of this qualifying of attributes. He says that it:
...illustrates again the fact that it is always possible to save a particular element within a larger theological complex by making appropriate adjustments at some other point; but that such manoeuvres are liable to result in more loss than gain. One difficulty has been resolved, but only by creating a new and equally formidable problem elsewhere (2005: 75).

Hick adds that an attempt to provide an overall metaphysics of kenosis is ‘as theologically unattractive as it is philosophically ingenious’ (ibid.).

Peter Forrest agrees that qualifying the divine attributes in this way seems ad hoc, and thus weakens the kenotic account ‘unless some further rationale is provided’ (2000: 130, my italics). However, he maintains that we can say more on the matter. He subscribes to the Anselmian view of God being ‘that than which nothing greater can be conceived’ (ibid.), meaning that we should progress to new conceptions of God if we conceive of something greater than previously. He says that the kenotic view is just this: a progression from the ‘omni’ God of the philosophers to ‘the kenotic God who out of love abandons absolute power, while retaining sufficient power to warrant total trust’ (ibid.: 131). The kenoticist can therefore maintain that there’s nothing ‘ad hoc’ about qualifying the divine attributes as above, because we’re doing so in line with conceiving of this greater God who, due to His love for the human race, sacrifices His divine prerogatives in order to know our condition, and for the purpose of our salvation. Moreover, there’s the added impact that in this project I’m specifically allowing the principle of the incarnation to shape my conception of God, meaning that the reconceptualization of divine attributes is obviously not an ad hoc amendment, since it’s in keeping with my overall method.

I’m wholly in agreement with Forrest’s argument: it certainly seems to me to postulate a more benevolent (and so, greater) God than one who sees that humankind has sinned, but doesn’t so humble Himself. This is endorsed by Brown, who says that:

There are two ways of helping others. We may help them from the secure platform of a superior position...but we may help them also by
the method of sympathy, and this means a real entrance into the conditions of another’s consciousness (1985: 246).

Brown provides Gore’s analogy of a teacher accommodating herself to the child’s mind in order to impart knowledge in the best possible way. It could thus be argued that the greatest possible way for God to help humankind was for Him to become incarnate, and kenotically so, since this provided Him with the most empathy for our (limited) human condition.

We’ve seen Forrest maintain that the kenotically incarnate Son retains ‘sufficient power to warrant total trust’. The issue now is what power the Son can retain if He ‘voluntarily and temporarily’ gives up His omnipotence. Swinburne is sceptical of whether any praiseworthy sense of power can be had by the Son if He’s kenotically incarnate. He says that if the Son emptied Himself of omnipotence then ‘there can (metaphysically) be a universe without there being a God in control at that time’ (1994: 232), which suggests that there are no convincing reasons ‘for supposing that there is a God at all since his control would not be needed to explain [the universe’s] existence’ (ibid.). Morris is sceptical for similar reasons, but in relation to the Son’s emptying of omniscience. He says that on a kenotic understanding of the incarnation ‘it…fails to be true that any divine person is logically or metaphysically immune to states of excessive ignorance concerning important truths about the world’ (1986: 100-1). It could therefore be argued that, contra Forrest, this kenotic conception of the Son wouldn’t be one that would ‘warrant total trust’, due to His lack of important knowledge and lack of ability to sustain the universe in existence.

This is particularly forceful when we imagine the Son as a vulnerable baby, or even an unborn baby as in the passage at the start of this section: it seems that He’d be completely powerless and lacking in knowledge sufficient for guiding us. Moreover, relinquishing control of the universe seems to be a reckless move from God the Son on this reading, because it seems irresponsible to cease control of one’s creation and leave it without a guardian.

A solution to this problem requires adopting a Social Trinitarian view, whereby the three persons of the Trinity are like a ‘family’ of persons in that
they’re sufficiently distinct so as to carry out different roles. Although, on Social Trinitarianism, each member of the Trinity is God, they exemplify different types of the divine substance, which means that they can potentially bear different properties. On Social Trinitarianism, it can thus be argued that it doesn’t matter that The Son (temporarily) lacks sufficient power and knowledge to sustain the universe, because the remaining members of the Trinity shoulder this burden between them. Evans says ‘I see no reason why, if the second person of the Trinity became incarnate and divested Himself of omnipotence and omniscience… the sustaining work of this person in creation could not be carried on by the other persons’ (2002: 259). This is because of the Social Trinitarian assumption that ‘the Godhead as a unity would…possess such properties as omnipotence and omniscience, but this does not necessarily imply that the individual persons of the Godhead must all possess these properties at any given time’ (ibid.:258, my italics).

I’d therefore argue that the incarnation is a far from reckless move on the part of the Son, because He can rest assured that the Father and Holy Spirit remain in control of the universe. It could even be added that once the Son is incarnate, ‘it is no longer a live option for either the Father or the Holy Spirit to become incarnate in this way’ (Feenstra 2006: 153), so we can be sure that the universe is always in the control of a divine person. I think that this account emphasises the love and trust between the persons of the Trinity, and their combined love for humankind due to their communal sacrifice for the purpose of redemption. I also venture that we’ve now answered the worry about the Son lacking sufficient omnipotence to be praiseworthy, and to be in control of the universe. With regards to the worry about Christ’s omniscience, this can be addressed in a similar way: by attributing this all-important knowledge to the Father and Holy Spirit. Hebblethwaite claims that we don’t

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28 As explained in this thesis’s introduction, a further exploration of the metaphysics of the Trinity isn’t something that I’ve space for here, but it should be noted that my argument does hinge upon the assumption of a Social Trinitarian view. A recent independent argument for Social Trinitarianism can be found in Swinburne (forthcoming). Swinburne isn’t a kenoticist, however: I’ve outlined His divided mind account above. I venture that all orthodox kenoticists must be Social Trinitarians, but not all Social Trinitarians are kenoticists.

29 By contrast, on Latin Trinitarianism, each member of the Trinity is token identical with God, which doesn’t allow for the members to possess distinct properties.

30 Presumably, we could add that something similar is the case for divine responses. For instance, when the Son is kenotically incarnate, it is the other members of the Trinity who hear, and respond to, our prayers.
need to worry about Jesus lacking knowledge because ‘the Blessed Trinity was perfectly well aware of what was being done, experienced and suffered’ (1987: 68).

In spite of this, Joseph Jedwab retorts that if the Son emptied Himself of omnipotence and so leaves the sustaining of the universe to the other members of the Trinity, He’ll no longer be the most perfect being that He could be. Jedwab argues that we can imagine a better being; one who does sustain the universe in existence. He says:

If two agents are qualitatively the same, except that one sustains the world and the other doesn’t,…then, in that respect, the first is better than the second. So if the Son doesn’t sustain the world, it seems we can imagine a better agent, one who is just like the Son except that it also sustains the world (2011: 182.).

Jedwab therefore seems to have Anselmian scruples about a being that gives up its omnipotence and so its ability to sustain the world. This would be in conflict with my earlier argument that a kenotic account of God postulates a ‘greater’ deity than the traditional ‘omni’ God.

However, Jedwab doesn’t make clear what criteria of perfection are in play when he uses the term ‘better’, as though we could unproblematically rank conceptions of God in terms of their ‘betterness’. In fact, my thought here is that, contra Jedwab, there’s in fact something even more perfect and great about the Son if He decides to sacrifice the divine prerogatives that are His omnipotence and omniscience. Such a God would be maximally loving, whereas comparably a God who didn’t make such a sacrifice wouldn’t, I submit, be ‘omni’ benevolent. By these standards, then, a kenotically incarnate God is (contra Jedwab) ‘better’ than one who declines this selfless act and continues to sustain the world. This supererogatory kenotic act is carried out for the purpose of Atonement, and is a huge sacrifice on the part of the Son. I think that if we have two agents, both omnipotent and omniscient, both un-obliged to surrender these attributes, there’s something more loving and praiseworthy about the one who chooses to humble herself by sacrificing them for the good of others. Furthermore, I think that becoming kenotically incarnate
is what the most perfect, self-sacrificing being would do, because the more He became like His creation, the more chance there would be that Atonement would be achieved – which makes it more perfect that the Son truly loses the divine attributes as a sacrifice for humankind.

Evans makes related arguments when he says that ‘it is not at all self-evident that a being who is incapable of self-limitation is superior to a being who is capable of such limitation. In fact, my intuitions are just the reverse on this issue’ (2002: 257-8). Similarly, in a later piece he says that the kenotic account deepens the extent to which God can know our condition. He writes that:

He has made himself vulnerable to all the common ills of humanity, and has no hidden divine powers to be called forth in a pinch…an assurance of love towards us as sufferers is far more powerful if it comes from one who has shown a willingness to share fully in our sufferings (2006: 203).

This links with my argument that a self-emptying Son who truly lives as one of us is far more perfect and praiseworthy than one who merely observes our suffering without taking action.

I’ve argued that the kenotic view can account for the person of Christ being fully human and remaining fully divine, without resorting to ‘ad hoc’ moves, because the Son is an even greater being by voluntarily divesting Himself of His omnipotence and omniscience. This humbling sacrifice demonstrates the depth of His love for humanity. Furthermore, the worry that this move is reckless, or that during Christ’s earthly life there was no being sustaining the universe, can be answered by appealing to the Father and the Spirit’s roles. Throughout the discussion thus far I’ve only been discussing the Son’s omnipotence and omniscience. However, there are of course other traits ascribed to Him, several of which appear to cause a problem for kenoticism, given that they appear logically incompatible with properties that we might think are required to make one human. I’ll devote the following section to a discussion of these.
It could be argued that in order to become fully human, the Son must also divest Himself of other attributes such as having no beginning in time, and existing of necessity. Davis refers to properties such as these as ‘ungiveupable’ (2006: 119), because of the impossibility of divesting oneself of the property of ‘not having been created’, or ‘having no beginning in time’. Furthermore, there seems to be a logical contradiction involved in losing the property of ‘existing of necessity’. It therefore seems that these ungiveupable properties can’t be changed retrospectively. We can’t, for instance, postulate that the Son was ‘necessary unless freely and temporarily choosing to be otherwise’ without contradiction. This thought can be strengthened through a useful example from Senor, which highlights the difference between ‘giveupable’ and ungiveupable properties. He says ‘suppose you are a married professor of philosophy who lives in New York City. Get divorced, quit your job, and move to Texas and you’ll have changed some of your rather important properties’ (2007b: 560). Senor compares these attributes to omnipotence and omniscience: it’s possible that the Son give these up just as a professor can give up her job and move to a different state. However, Senor then notes that there are other properties which we can’t change, because to give these up would entail a contradiction. He calls these the ‘stable’ (ibid.) properties, and gives the example of ‘being born in the twentieth century’. Similarly, for the Son, He can’t divest Himself of ‘not having been created’, because this is something that can’t be retrospectively changed.

The solution that’s readily suggested with these eternally true, ‘ungiveupable’ properties is reduplication, as I discussed in relation to compositionalist strategies above. Both Davis and Evans agree on this solution for the properties of ‘having no beginning’ and ‘being uncreated’. Davis says that we can say (for instance) that ‘Christ-as-divine was uncreated’ and ‘Christ-as-human was created’ (2011: 131). The issue, of course, is what exactly the kenoticist means by this reduplication. Compositionists (as we’ve seen) say that it’s qua part (of the composite) that incoherence is avoided, which leads to the complications of deciding which (if any) property the person simpliciter possesses.
Kenoticists, however, could say that it’s *qua phase sortal* that incoherence is avoided. For example, just as Theresa May has the power *qua* Prime Minister to dissolve Parliament, she doesn’t have this power *qua* school girl (when we consider an earlier phase of her life). Similarly, the Son *qua* unincarnate has no beginning in time, whereas *qua* incarnate phase he *does* have a beginning in time, because He *becomes* man. We have the same person all the while, but incoherence is avoided because we’re only ascribing the (would be) contradictory properties to the Son at different times, in virtue of these phases. This option isn’t available to temporalist compositionists, who maintain that Christ incarnate was both omnipotent *and* limited in power at any one time of the incarnation, such that the attributes belong simultaneously. This is perhaps partly why compositionists attempt to insulate these into ‘parts’ of the composite. Reduplication of phase sortals is certainly not available to atemporalist compositionists, who don’t have these different times of the Son’s life to work with at all.

It might be objected, as Smith does, that ‘one and the same individual can’t have two beginnings in time; and no more can one single individual have a beginning in time and *also* have no such beginning in time’ (1977: 267). Smith would therefore argue that we can’t reduplicate phase sortals in this way and say that the same person both has *and* doesn’t have a beginning in time. However, I think that it might be possible for the same (backwardly everlasting) *unincarnate* Son to have a beginning of His *incarnate* life. Just as a caterpillar transforming into a butterfly can have two beginnings in time (*qua* butterfly phase and *qua* caterpillar phase) and still be the same creature, so the Son of God can be backwardly everlasting *qua* pre-incarnate phase, and have a beginning in time *qua* incarnate phase. It can’t be denied that a huge transformation takes place when the Son becomes incarnate, but I submit that the incarnation is simply a new phase (which begins at a specific moment in time) of the (backwardly everlasting) Son of God’s life.

On a related note, Evans suggests a similarity between kenoticism and the other metaphysical models of the incarnation. He says ‘insofar as non-kenotic theories make use of…a reduplicative strategy, there is at least some common ground between kenotic theories of the incarnation and other theories’ (2002: 253). However, it’s worth adding that kenoticists *only* need to
employ reduplication for these ‘ungiveupable’ properties: they don’t (contra two minds and atemporalist compositionalist accounts) need it for omniscience and omnipotence, because these attributes are freely and voluntarily sacrificed.

I therefore venture that this is a further strength of kenoticism: it doesn’t face the complications that reduplication brings to the extent that the other metaphysical theories do. Firstly, it doesn’t need to appeal to a problematic reduplication of parts, since many of the Son’s divine attributes are sacrificed and so not possessed at all. Instead, it can appeal to phase sortals, which is a less problematic form of reduplication because the conflicting properties of the Son are predicated of Him at different times. Secondly, kenoticism only needs to employ reduplication for the ‘ungiveupable’ properties: these being the only ones that generate incoherences.

It’s also been suggested that the Son couldn’t divest Himself of His necessary existence. This is because when He’s incarnate He exists only contingently, and there’s the possibility that He cease to exist. This contingent existence is important because it shows that the Son has truly become a vulnerable human. However, if the Son’s existence becomes contingent, then it seems that He’d never have existed necessarily after all, since it will have always been possible that He no longer exist. Smith says that it’s ‘logically incoherent’ (1977: 265) to suppose that a necessary being can become contingent, because given this possibility of contingency, the being would have been contingent all along (ibid.). This is expanded upon by Davis, who says:

Suppose it is essential to divine beings that they be necessary beings…and suppose it is an essential property of human beings that they be contingent beings…It seems to follow from this that God cannot become man and remain God, for no being can be both necessary and contingent (1983: 122).

We can’t say that the Son exists necessarily qua unincarnate phase, and contingently qua incarnate phase, without generating a contradiction. However, Le Poidevin has suggested a way to resolve this problem. He proposes that we redefine de re necessary existence as ‘the ability of a being to sustain itself in existence’ (2013a: 222). This necessary existence is conditional, because it could
be given up when the Son divests Himself of His omnipotence. If He does so, He’ll no longer have the power to sustain Himself in existence, and His non-existence will be a genuine possibility, just as it is for the rest of humanity. Le Poidevin says that ‘the sense in which Jesus’ non-existence is a possibility [during the Incarnation] is just that his will to live by itself no more rules out his ceasing to exist than does our will to live’ (ibid.: 224). The Son’s necessary existence is therefore time-sensitive on this account: ‘it is true [to say that the Son exists necessarily] prior to the Incarnation…but false [to say this] during the Son’s incarnate existence’ (ibid.: 222). This is because the Son’s necessary existence is conditional on His possessing the power to continue sustaining Himself in existence, which He chooses to divest Himself of when He becomes incarnate. If we construe the Son’s de re necessary existence as His ‘ability to sustain Himself in existence’, therefore, then it seems that necessity isn’t so ‘ungiveupable’ after all. We can quite coherently say that, qua unincarnate phase, the Son possessed the ability to sustain Himself in existence. Likewise, we can say that qua incarnate phase, the Son lacked this ability.

This can be supported by the thought that, because God is omnibenevolent, we can trust that He’ll not do anything reckless. Whilst it may be the case that He lacks the ability to sustain Himself in existence when He exists incarnate, He leaves the Father and Spirit in full control when He does so, because He cares deeply about His creation and wants to ensure that it always has a guardian. It could also be argued along these lines that God’s existence is still necessary (in the unqualified sense of the term) in virtue of the Father and Spirit, but not of the Son when considered in isolation.31

Similarly, however, some thinkers question the incarnate Son’s immutability on the kenotic view, arguing that this ought by definition to be an ‘ungiveupable’ property. However, on the kenotic view the Son undergoes genuine change. He first possesses the attributes of omnipotence and omniscience, and at a later time He no longer does, which seems to suggest that the kenotic account can’t get off the ground.32 Brown acknowledges that:

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31 This would, I venture, require one to subscribe to a Social Trinitarian view, which I’ve already argued that the kenoticist must be committed to.
32 Morris argues independently that immutability is incompatible with kenoticism (1986: 96-7): in fact, it’s partly this that leads him to suggest the kenotic revision of the attributes omniscience and omnipotence.
There can be no question of attributing immutability to God on [the kenotic] model. God has become man, and this cannot be viewed otherwise than as a real change in God, since there is a change of substance that involves him in becoming a temporal being (1985: 256).  

Because of this intrinsic change in the Son, the burden of proof allegedly lies with the kenoticist to demonstrate ‘how such a radical revision of the traditional picture of the divine nature is able to distinguish between essential and contingent divine attributes, without undermining the immutability of God’ (Crisp 2007: 132).

Immutability is closely linked to atemporality, because timeless beings are supposed to be steadfast and immune to the possibility of intrinsic change. Only temporality involves intrinsic change, which is why (as argued above) postulating God as temporal admits of the kenotic account, whereas an atemporal God doesn’t.  

I therefore venture that we must weaken our conception of immutability if we’re subscribing to kenoticism, because we must allow for the Son’s properties to undergo such change. What does remain immutable, however, is His benevolent nature: there’s always, of necessity, no possibility that the Son can sin, and no real possibility that He can succumb to temptation.  

To answer Crisp’s challenge, therefore, I argue that God’s immutable omnibenevolence is essential to His divinity, and He never loses this, nor is there any possibility that He do so. Brown sums up this response:

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33 This implies that Brown understands the incarnation to involve a change from atemporality to temporality. I’ve argued in the previous chapter that this is an incoherent transition, since the atemporality wouldn’t have been genuine and the being must in fact have been temporal all along. Nevertheless, I think that Brown’s point still stands that a kenotically incarnate God can’t be immutable, due to the changes that this God undergoes in, for instance, divesting Himself of omnipotence and omniscience.

34 If God is temporal, we’re already admitting that He can know (say) at one time that it’s now Tuesday, and at a different time know instead that it’s now Wednesday – or at least, we are if the A-theory of time is true. If the B-theory is true, we’re still admitting that a temporal God’s life is sequentially ordered.

35 I suggested this argument above (section 1.4), but argued that if the two minds theorist adopts this line of thought, her model ends up collapsing into just one mind, due to the extent of control that the divine mind has over the human one. The kenoticist, however, can argue that the human Jesus just is omnibenevolent: there’s nothing controlling Him to ensure that He’s always perfectly moral.
More worrying is the contention that change is always for the worse or better and so, even if in God's case it is always for the better, this would still impugn his divine perfection. But, provided his moral perfection is maintained, it is hard to see how this could constitute a serious challenge (1985: 257).

Immutability in this weaker sense is therefore not undermined by kenoticism. Davis calls it ‘soft’ immutability, which he describes as ‘the doctrine that God is not fickle, capricious, mercurial, or moody; God’s holy and benevolent nature remains ever and eternally the same; God is faithful in keeping God’s promises; God’s aims and intentions for human beings do not change’ (2006: 137). Similarly, Marilyn McCord Adams emphasises that the Son’s retention and exercise of the moral attributes ‘during His earthly career is supposed to enable Him to be the true light of the world’ (2006: 87). This argument also lends support to the earlier one that Christ incarnate does remain truly divine, because He retains His perfect goodness, which no (mere) human possesses. Evans says that ‘what is retained will chiefly be the self-giving of love that is regarded as lying at the heart of divinity and which is exhibited precisely in God’s willingness to empty himself for the sake of his creatures’ (2002: 249). God’s love is exemplified when unincarnate through (amongst many other things) His decision to become incarnate and live as a mere human being, and culminates when He’s incarnate through His willingness to suffer on the cross, without wavering in His love of others. Both of these sacrifices, I think, demonstrate the immutability of divine love.

Many will be dissatisfied with soft immutability, arguing that strict immutability (and so, atemporality) is essential to the divine nature. However, I think that this allegation begs the question against the temporalist (and so, the kenoticist). I hope that I’ve now argued a strong enough case for kenoticism that it won’t be dismissed out of hand because it involves a weakening of the concept of divine immutability, for kenoticism certainly has many independent strengths that deserve due consideration.

I’ve outlined the kenotic account, explaining why it must go hand in hand with a temporal conception of God’s relation to time. I defended it against the allegation that a kenotically incarnate Christ can’t be truly divine,
arguing that a reconceptualization of the divine attributes to ensure Jesus’s divinity isn’t an ad hoc move, because it allows for maximal preservation of divine love. A kenotically incarnate God is one who, because of the extent of His deep, steadfast love for His creation, humbles Himself by taking on human form and sacrificing many divine prerogatives. He voluntarily chooses to sacrifice these in a supererogatory act, for the purpose of Atonement.

It’s because of the power and extent of this sacrifice that I’m attracted to the kenotic view, and because of its emotive strength that I believe it deserves serious consideration, despite its requiring a weakening of the traditional conception of immutability, which at any rate I’ve suggested that all temporalists must endorse. Moreover, kenoticists need only employ reduplication for the properties of ‘having no beginning in time’, ‘being uncreated’, and ‘existing of (qualified) necessity’ – and they need only propose reduplication of phase sortals, not of parts. This is a strength of kenoticism because of the problems that the reduplication of parts approach gives rise to.

In spite of these strengths, there remains one important problem that kenoticism faces, which is the Son’s glorification. If Christ regains omnipotence and omniscience when He’s glorified, we’re left wondering how it is that He can remain truly human. This will be discussed in Chapter 6. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I’ll conclude that kenoticists can deal sufficiently with the incoherence problem that threatens the incarnation, particularly in comparison with how their atemporalist compositionalist rivals can cope. A temporal God is therefore looking like the most plausible construal of divine eternity, in light of this.

(3) CONCLUSION

This chapter examined temporal solutions to the incoherence problem: the problem created by ascribing contradictory attributes to Christ incarnate. I firstly outlined the two minds model of the incarnation, and argued that we can interpret it under a compositionalist or a transformationalist umbrella. I argued that both interpretations are unable to avoid the incoherence problem in a manner that avoids heresy. I next considered a different transformationalist account: kenoticism. I argued that a kenotic model can account for the
incarnate Christ being truly divine (in spite of the extent of His sacrifice for humankind), truly human and one individual, without any of the threats of Nestorianism or Apollinarianism that come with the two minds view. Moreover, I demonstrated that the kenotic model, through its poetic picture of the Son ‘emptying’ Himself for the sake of all others in a supererogatory act of goodness, can best account for the humbling sacrifice that the Son underwent for humankind, and the extent to which He really did share our condition.

I also demonstrated why the kenotic model can only go hand in hand with a temporal construal of God’s relation to time. It essentially involves (intrinsic) change in the Son, and this change has to take place at a time. This outcome, combined with the fact that atemporalist compositionalist models were unable to avoid the incoherence problem in an orthodox way, leaves a temporal God looking like the most appealing option. However, this is conditional on how the various models can account for the last hurdle of the Son’s glorification, which will be the subject of the next part of my thesis.
PART III) GLORIFICATION

[He] ascended to heaven, where He sits at the Father’s right hand (Leith, 1963: 36).

If the philosophical ground that examines the intersection of God’s relation to time and the incarnation is only just beginning to be covered, then that which considers God’s relation to time in specific light of the end result of Christ’s life on earth – His glorification – is almost entirely unexplored. The divine glorification (or exaltation) is an extremely important element of the incarnation because Christ’s ascension into Heaven as a being that is both divine and human is believed to have paved the way for the rest of humankind to achieve salvation. It’s therefore a foundation for other important ideas, notably ones that can be a great source of comfort for believers – such as the belief that we will meet our (saved) loved ones in heaven again after their deaths. Hill (2012) has recently pioneered a much needed voyage into this exciting area, which promises to provide interesting results for anybody considering the Christian God’s relation to time. Hill’s paper is therefore the main focal point for discussion in Chapters 5 and 6. In particular, I endorse, and rely heavily upon, his two requirements for the Son’s glorification, which I outline presently. However, I ultimately dispute Hill’s claim that atemporalist compositionalist models are the only ones that can accommodate the Son’s glorification.¹ I argue against the success of atemporalist compositionalist models in Chapter 5. What is more, in Chapter 6, I argue (again contra Hill) that temporalist models (specifically, kenotic models) are alone in being able to account for Hill’s two ‘glorification requirements’.

¹ As a reminder, compositionalist models (introduced and discussed at length in Chapter 3, and discussed again in Chapter 4) are those whereby ‘Christ is a compound of qualitatively and numerically different constituents: a divine mind, a human body, and, on some models, a human mind as well’ (Marmodoro & Hill 2010: 469). Other authors refer to the third part of the composite as the Son’s human ‘soul’, and I use the terms ‘soul’ and ‘mind’ interchangeably.
CHAPTER 5
DIVINE ATEMPORALITY AND THE EXALTATION

(1) EXALULATION EXPLAINED

Hill has two criteria for divine glorification, which I'll be privileging in this part of the thesis. He dubs them the ‘exaltation’ and ‘perpetual humanity’ requirements, respectively. According to the former:

[Exaltation Requirement]: After his death, Jesus both was raised from the dead and subsequently ascended into heaven. After these events, he is exalted—i.e., he enjoys the full divine life and properties, including omniscience and omnipotence (Hill, 2012: 3).

That is, the exalted Son must be both omniscient and omnipotent, regardless of whether or not He possessed these divine properties when He lived on earth. I follow Hill in arguing that, if the Son did lack these properties on Earth, it doesn’t matter at which precise point He regains them: be it ‘his resurrection, his ascension, or some other point’ (ibid) – all that matters is that He does possess them once He’s exalted. This requirement is what makes the Son’s glorification different to that of mere humans: the glorified Son is omniscient and omnipotent, whereas when mere humans are glorified, they don’t possess these attributes. Henceforth, I’ll refer to the glorification of mere humans as salvation. When I refer to the Son’s glorification, I mean His exaltation, which encompasses the added possession of omniscience and omnipotence. Glorification, therefore, will be the umbrella term for both the Son’s exaltation, and the salvation of us (limited) humans.

According to the perpetual humanity requirement:

2 Not least because to require a precise point at which the Son comes to enjoy full omnipotence and omniscience could potentially be to beg the question against divine timelessness, according to which God’s life isn’t sequenced.
Perpetual Humanity Requirement: After his exaltation, Jesus remains fully human (ibid.: 4).

Hill proceeds to argue for the importance of both of these requirements to orthodox Christianity, although he doesn’t mean for his argument to be conclusive – he simply aims to show that there’s a great deal of favourable support for them. His central research question, which the bulk of his paper tackles, then becomes: ‘Assuming that the exaltation and perpetual humanity requirements are serious constraints upon Christology, what consequences follow for the metaphysics of the incarnation?’ (ibid., my italics).

In providing support for the exaltation requirement, Hill draws upon the fact that it’s largely supported by the Christian tradition – ‘since the bulk of Christian tradition argues that [The Son] never ceased to be omnipotent and omniscient even in his earthly career’ (ibid.: 4). By this, Hill means that it’s only kenoticists who argue that the Son ever lacked these divine properties, so by default those who aren’t kenoticists will assume that of course, the exalted Son possesses them. Hill acknowledges that many theologians, however, hold that during His earthly ministry Christ lacked the ‘full exercise’ of His omnipotence and omniscience (ibid.: 5). At any rate, Hill suggests that: ‘to whatever degree (if at all) one supposes that, in his earthly career, Christ gave up the divine properties, to that degree, one may ask whether he regained them upon his exaltation’ (ibid.).

In considering the support for the perpetual humanity requirement, Hill admits that endorsement of it from the church councils is lacking (ibid.: 6), but says that it can be found in the works of important writers such as Gregory of Nazianzus, Augustine, Aquinas and Karl Barth (ibid.: 6-7). However, he also notes that the Son’s perpetual humanity has recently been questioned – citing Swinburne as an example of one such questioner (ibid.: 7). In spite of this, Hill proceeds to suggest some reasons why the Son’s perpetual humanity is required, such as that ‘if the Son remains human perpetually, that would demonstrate a much greater commitment to humanity than a mere temporary

3 This qualification will come to be important in Chapter 6.
4 To name a few: Hill also cites the work of others.
union would’ (ibid.). He also cites some arguments in favour of this requirement from Forrest and Feenstra (ibid.), whose work will come to play an important role in this part of the thesis. For instance, Feenstra discusses the fact that, according to Chalcedon, Christ ‘is’ (not ‘was’) fully human (1989: 147). Furthermore, Forrest argues that denying the perpetual humanity requirement would mean that Jesus would be unable to fulfil His role as mediator between ‘the purely divine and the purely human’ (Forrest 2000: 134).

Finally, Hill appeals to the importance of Christ’s perpetual humanity for humankind achieving salvation themselves. He says that ‘if God only became man for a while, and is no longer man, then this surely casts doubt into man’s hope of becoming God’ (2012: 8). A further source of support for the perpetual humanity requirement has been offered since Hill’s paper was published, and comes from Mullins. He says that orthodoxy ‘denies that the Son ceased to be incarnate at the ascension. Even though no ecumenical council makes a ruling on this issue, the continual incarnation of the Son is affirmed by a majority of early Church fathers’ (2016: 174).

Hill later builds upon his two requirements by specifying a more precise formulation of them:

\[\text{[Exaltation Requirement*]: It is true now that Christ has, and exercises, all the divine attributes, including omnipotence and omniscience (2012: 9).}\]

\[\text{[Perpetual Humanity Requirement*]: It is true now that the Son is fully human as well as fully divine (ibid.).}\]

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5 Incidentally, this assertion that we humans hope to ‘become’ God is a rather strange way of putting things. Rather, it seems more accurate to say that humankind hopes to achieve salvation. This links to my endorsement of the thought that we ordinary humans don’t, unlike the Son, become omniscient and omnipotent when we’re saved, as well as my distinction between exaltation and salvation, all of which was outlined at the start of this chapter.

6 Mullins seems to be referring specifically to the continued embodiment of the Son, because He also says: ‘no embodiment, no incarnation. Incarnation means taking on flesh’ (Mullins 2016: 192). This would still presumably be an exemplification of the Son’s perpetual humanity, though, whether or not we consider this ‘flesh’ to be a necessary or sufficient guarantee of that humanity.

7 The use of asterisks here is my addition to this version of Hill’s requirements, for ease of distinction between the different formulations.
This indexical usage (and the ways in which temporalists and atemporalists can interpret it) will be important in the discussion that follows. Furthermore, these latter understandings of the exaltation and perpetual humanity requirements seem particularly significant because of the importance to millions of believers of the thought that Christ is ‘now’ in Heaven.\(^8\) If this weren’t the case, it would detract from the permanence of the resurrection, and thus from the belief that the rest of humanity, too, can achieve glorification for themselves. In considering the compatibility of atemporality and temporality with the Son’s glorification, I’ll follow Hill in assuming that these two requirements must be met by any account of the divine glorification worth its salt. Hill claims that although they may not be formally required by Christian orthodoxy, the requirements ‘are nevertheless claims that few orthodox Christians will wish to deny’ (2012: 9). My thesis has included the Son’s glorification (exaltation) as an important element of the incarnation itself, and thus I’m privileging Hill’s two requirements as a necessary benchmark that any credible account of the incarnation must be able to accommodate.

Hill considers the thought that for many, a ‘figurative’ understanding of the two glorification requirements might be preferable, because we shouldn’t take such claims literally (ibid.: 9). Unfortunately, Hill doesn’t specify how he understands the distinction between ‘literal’ and ‘figurative’. Nevertheless, I take it that any ‘figurative’ understanding of Hill’s requirements is undesirable for my purposes. The account of the incarnation that I’m seeking is a metaphysical one, so I’ll assess atemporalism and temporalism only for their ability to provide such an interpretation of Hill’s glorification requirements.\(^9\) I’m interested, for example, in preserving the present truth that the Son is fully human \textit{in reality}. This thesis is, after all, one that privileges a coherent realist metaphysics of the incarnation above all else, and I’ll therefore not be satisfied with any remotely ‘figurative’ understanding of Hill’s requirements.

Hill claims that ‘those unwilling to accept the consequences [that he argues follow from the two requirements] may consider the arguments in this

\(^8\) This is the case whether we interpret this as meaning that Christ is ‘now’, \textit{at} this time, in Heaven, or else that it’s \textit{timelessly true} ‘now’ (and, indeed, at all times) that Christ is in Heaven. This distinction will come to be important as this chapter unfolds.

\(^9\) I remain open to a non-literal interpretation of statements about the Son’s physicality – for example, regarding the claim in this chapter’s epigraph that the Son is ‘sitting’ at the right hand of the Father.
paper to be good reasons not to take the two requirements seriously’ (ibid. 4).
It’s here that I diverge from Hill, because I take issue with what Hill claims
these ‘consequences’ to be: in this chapter, I dispute Hill’s claim that if God is
timeless, we can satisfactorily accommodate the two requirements only by
adopting a compositionalist model of the incarnation.

In section 2, I remind the reader of the state of play so far for the
atemporalist, based on discussion in the previous two parts of the thesis. That
is, we begin these chapters with the atemporalist position looking significantly
weaker than its temporalist counterpart. Nevertheless, it’s important to give the
atemporalist position fair consideration in this part of the thesis. I also explain
why I’m considering only atemporalist compositionism in this chapter. In
section 3, I explain why atemporalist compositionism can accommodate only
Hill’s second formulation of the glorification requirements. I agree with Hill
that the atemporalist has no problem with accommodating the exaltation
requirement as understood in this second way. I next consider the perpetual
humanity requirement as formulated in this way. I suggest the way that
atemporalists can best understand the claim that it’s ‘true now’ that the Son is
fully human, which is that it’s timelessly true that the Son is fully human, as well
as fully divine. In section 4, I proceed to criticise this way of reading the claim.
I conclude that, based on this and on my arguments in the previous part of the
thesis, the atemporalist position is unable to account for an orthodox
metaphysics of the incarnation.

(2) ATEMPORALISM: THE STORY SO FAR

The atemporalist position has been considered in the previous two
parts of this thesis. In the first part, I examined whether atemporalism and
temporalism are able to account for the Son ‘becoming’ incarnate.
Temporalism, I argued, is able to do so, by being able to respond to the
worries faced by kind-essentialism. I considered three ways in which the
atemporalist might be able to understand the Son timelessly ‘becoming’
icarnate. I argued that only one of these is provisionally viable: the Son
becomes incarnate by undergoing an extrinsic change, in virtue of His human
body (and soul) becoming related to Him. Such a change doesn’t require the
Son to be subject to the passage of time, I suggested, because He undergoes such change in virtue of something else undergoing intrinsic change. I argued that, in order for the Son to undergo extrinsic change, we must adhere to a particular model of the incarnation: compositionalism. According to compositionalism, the incarnate Son is composed of various parts, and it’s this parthood that (allegedly) enables the divine, timeless part of the composite to remain unchanged when the Son becomes incarnate. An intrinsic change takes place in reality itself, when the human parts of the composite come to exist, it was argued.

In the second part of my thesis, I argued that atemporalism fails to overcome the incoherence problem. I specifically examined atemporal compositionalism, due to it being the only provisionally successful way to model a timeless God becoming incarnate. However, I argued that atemporal compositionalism fails to provide a sufficient account of how it is that the Son can be fully divine, fully human, and one single person. What is more, I argued that the temporalist position (by appealing specifically to kenoticism) is able to overcome the incoherence problem.

We therefore enter this examination of the Son’s glorification with the temporalist position looking by far the strongest. However, in order to be as charitable as possible to the atemporalist, I’ll now examine how she might account for the Son’s glorification, focusing specifically on Hill’s glorification requirements. I’ll consider only atemporal compositionalism. I argued in Chapter 3 that any would-be atemporalist who claims that the Son somehow transformed into a human upon becoming incarnate isn’t in fact an atemporalist, because this is an intrinsic change, which requires one to be subject to the passage of time. This rules out atemporalist transformationalist models – the family of models of the incarnation that rival compositionalist ones. Similarly, two minds accounts on the one hand can’t accommodate atemporalism because they require the divine mind to change intrinsically when the Son becomes incarnate (understood in this way, they’re a species of transformationalist models). On the other hand, I argued in Chapter 4 that two minds accounts collapse into compositionalist models (because they allege that the two minds are parts of Christ). Furthermore, in line with Hill I think that regarding the former two minds models, to the extent that they suppose the
Son must bear the same relation to His body that we bear to our bodies (whatever this relation may be), they can’t allow for atemporality. This is because they require that the divine mind be capable of discursive thought. Such chains of reasoning, says Hill, would require the Son to be temporal (2012: 25).

Compositionalist models therefore appear to be the only option on the table for atemporalists. What is more, they’re not in great shape: I argued that said models are unable to avoid the incoherence problem posed by the demands of incarnational orthodoxy. Nevertheless, I don’t want the temporal order in which I’m examining these elements of the incarnation to unfairly affect my analysis of a timeless God. I’ll therefore examine whether atemporalist compositionalism can account for Hill’s two glorification requirements. I’ll argue, contra Hill, that it can’t do so. Ipso facto, I conclude that divine atemporalism as a whole can’t account for the Son’s glorification.

(3) INTERPRETING THE GLORIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

As a reminder, Hill’s first formulation of the two glorification requirements is as follows:

[Exaltation Requirement]: After his death, Jesus both was raised from the dead and subsequently ascended into heaven. After these events, he is exalted—i.e., he enjoys the full divine life and properties, including omniscience and omnipotence (Hill, 2012: 3).

[Perpetual Humanity Requirement]: After his exaltation, Jesus remains fully human (ibid.: 4).

I think it’s uncontroversial that the atemporalist is unable to endorse the glorification requirements when formulated in this way, for they contain unacceptably temporal language. For instance, the exaltation requirement itself talks about the Son ‘subsequently’ ascending into heaven, and His being exalted ‘after’ He was raised from the dead. Furthermore, the perpetual
humanity requirement claims that the Son is fully human ‘after’ His exaltation. I’ll therefore consider these formulations of the requirements no further.

Of course, this isn’t to say that we can’t interpret these requirements in a manner that’s more friendly to atemporalism. Hill provides us with the following versions of the two requirements, which I also outlined above:

*Exaltation Requirement*:

It is true now that Christ has and exercises, all the divine attributes, including omnipotence and omniscience (2012: 9).

*Perpetual Humanity Requirement*:

It is true now that the Son is fully human as well as fully divine (ibid.).

These statements can be argued to be more compatible with divine timelessness, for reasons that I’ll explain presently. In fact, I venture that Hill introduces these versions of the requirements specifically so as not to rule out atemporalism from the get-go. In his discussion of atemporalism and the Son’s glorification, Hill seems only to be considering this latter formulation of the two requirements. In a footnote, he says that ‘for a being that exists only outside time and not within time, it might be true at time \( t \) that it bears certain properties, but it would not be true that it bears these properties at time \( t' \)’ (ibid.: 25). The reason for this, presumably, is that an atemporal being can’t bear any properties ‘at’ any time, because an atemporal being can’t exist ‘at’ any time. Hill’s first formulation of the requirements seems to suggest that the Son does bear properties at a time (for instance, He is exalted [at the time] after His death), so I’ll therefore focus only on his second versions of the requirements.

Hill claims that the atemporalist has ‘clearly no problem’ (ibid.: 26) with meeting the exaltation requirement, which I’m understanding as the exaltation requirement*. He says:

On atemporalism, the Son does not change, because atemporal things cannot change. If at any point in time it is true that the Son enjoys the divine properties such as omnipotence and omniscience, then that is

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10 Of course, Hill proceeds to argue that the atemporalist position is the most compatible with the exaltation, so it’s particularly important that he provides us with a way for the atemporalist to understand the glorification requirements.
true at every point in time, including during Jesus’ earthly career and afterwards (ibid.: 26-7).

In other words, because the Son never relinquishes omnipotence and omniscience, there’s no problem with His possessing these attributes in His exalted state. It’s only kenoticism, after all, which claims that the Son relinquishes these divine prerogatives when He becomes incarnate. Hill is clearly speaking in terms of the exaltation requirement* here: it’s ‘true now’ – and, indeed, at every moment – that the Son exercises omniscience and omnipotence. This doesn’t, according to Hill, require that the Son is omniscient and omnipotent at any moment in time: it’s a timeless truth that the Son is omniscient and omnipotent. This seems all well and good in the case of these divine attributes, and I’m happy to grant that the atemporalist can meet the exaltation requirement*. However, the situation is by no means straightforward when we consider the Son’s humanity, in the form of the perpetual humanity requirement*. I’ll explain this in the subsequent section.

(4) THE TIMELESS TRUTH OF THE SON’S HUMANITY?

I’ll now argue that atemporalists can’t account for the perpetual humanity requirement, even under what I’ve suggested is Hill’s ‘atemporalist friendly’ version of it. Once more, according to this requirement:

\textbf{[Perpetual Humanity Requirement*]:} It is true now that the Son is fully human as well as fully divine.

I think that the atemporalist must interpret this requirement as meaning that it’s \textit{timelessly} true that the Son is fully human, as well as fully divine. At any time, it’s true to say that ‘the Son of God is incarnate’. Therefore, it’s also true ‘now’, or at the time simultaneous with this utterance, that the Son is fully human, because it’s true at \textit{all} times. Importantly, this doesn’t mean that the Son Himself need exist at any of these times. This would, after all, mean that the Son is temporal, because to exist \textit{at} any time is to be temporal. It’s helpful to think about numbers, by way of comparison. Numbers, it seems, exist
timelessly, and yet at every moment of time, it’s true that they exist: they themselves just don’t exist at any of these moments in question. If, and only if, the atemporalist has the resources to account for the timeless truth of the Son’s humanity, then it seems that she’s met the Perpetual Humanity requirement*, which in turn I’ve argued is needed for her to satisfactorily account for the exaltation. Hill seems to have the timeless truth of the Son’s humanity in mind when He says:

If the Son is human in virtue of existing in a certain relation to Jesus’s body and soul, then because, on atemporalism, the Son exists outside time, it is true at all times that he (timelessly) exists in that relation to them. It is no more true during Jesus’s lifetime than it is at any other time, including the period afterwards or even today (ibid.: 27).

Hill isn’t alone is taking this stance. Leftow, for instance, comments that ‘if God is timeless and incarnate, then He just is timelessly incarnate: the whole of His timeless life is spent so’ (2002: 295). Furthermore, Stump and Kretzmann remark that ‘the divine nature of the second person of the Trinity…cannot become temporal; nor could the second person at some time acquire a human nature He does not eternally have’ (1981: 453, my italics).11

I’ll now argue that in spite of support for this claim, it isn’t a desirable result for an account of the incarnation. I argued in Chapter 1 that the only way to (provisionally) understand a timeless Son becoming incarnate is through His undergoing extrinsic change. Presumably, this has to mean that the Son is timelessly incarnate, for He himself undergoes no intrinsic change whatsoever when His human body and soul join with Him. It must therefore be a timeless truth that the Son is incarnate. Now, in virtue of what is this timeless truth true? It can’t be that the Son timelessly possesses the abstract property of humanity. Thanks to Leftow, we can see that it’s the Son’s concrete possession of ‘a full natural endowment of a human being, that is, a human body and (if such there be) soul ‘carrying’ a human mind and will’ (2002: 278) that makes Him human. It’s because of this that the Son possesses the abstract property of being

11 ‘Eternally’ is to be read here as ‘timelessly’.
human – that is, a concrete human nature is more fundamental than possessing
the abstract property of humanity.\textsuperscript{12} Leftow comments that:

One does not usually interact directly with properties, ‘assuming’ or
‘exemplifying’ them. Concrete things act, and in virtue of their
activities, they come to exemplify properties. Abstract-nature
incarnation can take place only \textit{by} concrete-nature incarnation. In this
sense, the concrete nature view of the incarnation has to be basic (ibid.: 279).

Perhaps, then, the most obvious way that we might account for the timeless
truth of the Son’s humanity (and hence, account for the Perpetual Humanity
requirement), is thanks to the Son’s timeless relation to His human body and
soul. This certainly seems to be what Hill has in mind in the above passage.
However, it can’t be that His body and soul \textit{themselves} exist timelessly. After all,
the Son’s human body and soul come into existence at a particular time.
Leftow himself would agree with this. He says that ‘the Son ‘gets to’ [His
human body and soul] before [they] are or constitute persons [because] Christ
assumes [His human body and soul] as a zygote, at the moment of conception’
(2002: 281). Presumably, Leftow means that the human body and soul of the
composite Christ don’t exist prior to their formation of a divine composite
with the Son of God. This seems particularly important to Leftow, lest the Son
appear to be a sort of ‘body snatcher’. He says that the Son didn’t ‘merely
[team] up with an already existing person…nor did the Son ‘take over’ the
body of an independently existing animal: incarnation is not possession’ (ibid.: 278).
The Son’s human body and soul therefore come into existence at a time,
and exist at successive moments of time. They can’t exist timelessly in such a
way that they’re able to be what guarantees the Son’s timeless humanity.

Alternatively, then, perhaps the Son is timelessly related to His human
body and soul \textit{even though} these human part(s) of the divine composite are
themselves temporal. The timeless truth of the Son’s humanity could then be
made true by the coming into existence of His human body and soul, and their

\textsuperscript{12} This distinction between the possession of an ‘abstract’ and ‘concrete’ human nature is
originally discussed by Plantinga (1999) but is built upon here by Leftow. I examined this
distinction in Chapter 2.
formation of a composite with the timeless Son as a part. This certainly seems to be Leftow’s preferred approach. He says that the Son remains human when exalted because although B may have died, GS is still timelessly related to S. Because of this relation, He says that ‘GS remains human or else is as close to human as any of us is…when the like occurs to us (2011a: 314). Presumably, this is all timelessly true of GS (that He’ll join with B+S, and that later B will die), lest GS be temporal. Leftow also provides us with an analogy to illustrate how the Son can be timelessly human, in spite of (from our temporal perspective) the human parts of the composite Christ not existing until He is born as the human Jesus. Leftow asserts that a single brick is always part of a wall, even before the rest of the bricks are added, thanks to the builder’s intent to produce a wall:

I suggest similarly that the Son is part of a human composite as soon as the Son exists, even if the rest of the composite does not yet exist – for the rest of the composite is surely coming, and the builder’s intent makes the Son so. If the Son is part of a human composite, the Son is human (2002: 297).

Importantly, according to this analogy, a single brick is only part of a wall. Leftow says ‘the brick is not a wall by itself, but it is part of a wall by itself’ (ibid.: 296). Therefore, the best we can say on this analogy is that the Son is timelessly part of a human composite. Leftow thinks it can follow from this that the Son is human: ‘if the Son is part of a human composite, the Son is human’ (ibid.: 297). Admittedly, being part of such a composite is what makes the Son human, according to compositionalism. But what of the Son being timelessly part of a human composite? Leftow’s analogy doesn’t get us all the way to asserting that ‘it is timelessly true (and hence, ‘true now’) that the Son is fully human’, in line with the perpetual humanity requirement*. In order to strengthen this, perhaps more needs to be made of the fact that the rest of the bricks, or the human parts of the composite, have come. It’s here that we begin to see a disanalogy. Moreover, it’s a disanalogy that makes us aware of the

13 Nevertheless, I argued against the success of atemporal compositionalism at length in Chapter 3. I’ll therefore not rehearse again the worries associated with God the Son being a mere ‘part’ of the human Jesus, as opposed to being identical with Him.
temporal notions that Leftow’s example relies upon. Firstly, in the case of bricks, they are a necessary part of (brick) walls. All brick walls begin with a single brick. In the case of God the Son, however, He’s not a necessary part of a human, because none of us have the Son as a part. However, it’s largely the fact that many walls begin with a single brick that permits the intuition that a single brick can be part of a wall. No humans besides (allegedly) Jesus Christ are formed by human parts joining with the divine Son of God, however.

Perhaps the similarity between the examples relies less on the importance of the parts to their wholes, and more on the respective parts coming to form a whole. However, this seems to make the Son’s humanity unacceptably reliant on the temporal event of His human body and soul joining with Him, to the extent that we might worry that He can’t be ‘timelessly’ incarnate. At the very least, it seems difficult to make sense of Leftow’s analogy without some sort of notion of temporality. We require the builder to intend to add more bricks to the single brick at a later moment, in order to be happy that the single brick is in fact part of a wall. Similarly, Leftow talks in the above passage about the Son being incarnate despite the fact that His human body and soul do ‘not yet’ exist – suggesting that His being incarnate relies on an event in time: the coming into existence of His human body and soul. If we can’t introduce this notion of a ‘later’ time, we can’t understand what it means for the Son to be incarnate. If we’re to be able to say, with Leftow, that in (say) 5 BC the Son was human ‘because S+B was to exist and he was to join with it’ (ibid.), it must be that somebody asserting in 5 BC ‘(it’s true now that) God the Son is fully human’ was telling the truth. Now, what makes this true? Leftow would say (from the perspective of 5 BC) the future fact that the Son is joined by B+S (he says ‘God the Son could have been human [at any time before the birth of Christ] due to His relations to a future event’ (ibid.: 296)). However, it seems that in order to argue for an atemporal Son, Leftow is relying on temporal stages in the composite Christ’s life, which seems at best to exhibit a great tension, and at worst to be flatly incoherent. After all, even if these temporal stages don’t exist in the life of the Son

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14 After all, the incarnation is a unique event, so we surely don’t want to endorse a view whereby the Son is a part of other humans besides Jesus.
Himself, but rather in the life of the human ‘parts’ of the divine composite Christ, then Leftow still has rather a lot to explain.

In fact, Leftow states in a footnote in the paper in question that ‘God’s incarnate life is some sort of non-temporal part of His life’ (ibid: 282). Perhaps he’d remind us of this at this juncture, asserting that, because God’s incarnate life is *timelessly* a part of His life, he’s glad to depart from the wall analogy at this point. The brick can’t form a wall until the other bricks come along (after a specific period of time), but the Son is *timelessly* human because of it being timelessly true that His life includes the incarnation ‘stage’. I consider this response to be troubling, because it requires that God’s incarnate life be at once a *timeless* part of a life (the overall timeless life of God the Son), and also a *temporal* part (in fact, a temporal whole) of a life (the life of the man Jesus). This seems extremely peculiar, and is just one reason why I think that the timeless truth of the Son’s humanity is a problematic thought.

Nevertheless, one could argue that the timeless truth of the Son’s humanity is itself made true by His thinking certain thoughts and feeling certain sensations as a result of being incarnate, that He wouldn’t have felt had He not been incarnate. This is certainly something that Leftow endorses (ibid: 299). It could be supported by the account of extrinsic change that’s currently on the table: the Son timelessly thinks these human thoughts and feels these human sensations, and doesn’t change intrinsically in doing so. Although the Son being incarnate is made true by the (temporal) event of the human parts of the composite joining with Him, this doesn’t require any temporal stages in His own, timeless life, the response might go. If this were the case, then we could grant that the Son is timelessly incarnate as a human, and hence we could grant the perpetual humanity requirement*.

After all, I argued in Chapter 1 that this account of extrinsic change was a provisionally viable way to explain how the Son could ‘become’ incarnate without undergoing intrinsic change. However, we’re now considering this account as a means of explaining the *timeless truth* of the Son’s humanity. It’s here that I think that problems with the extrinsic change account start to emerge. Leftow says of these thoughts and sensations that the Son experienced as a result of being incarnate: ‘if God is timelessly incarnate, He has always had these, timelessly, even before [the human parts of the composite] appeared’
(ibid.). For instance, presumably the human Jesus had many thoughts centred around His having a body. I agree with Leftow here, but I think that this causes problems for the atemporalist. That is, if the Son undergoes no intrinsic change whatsoever as a result of becoming incarnate, then all thoughts He has as a result of His humanity must indeed be thought timelessly. This argument seems merely to shift a bump in the atemporalist’s rug, however, as we’ll now see.

There are many worries to be had about the thought that the Son timelessly thinks these ‘human’ thoughts and timelessly feels these ‘human’ sensations. This becomes apparent when we imagine the sorts of sensations that are attributed to the incarnate Son. Holland argues that if the Son is eternally incarnate, then it must also be held that He’s eternally united with B+S. The alternative option, after all, is that He becomes united with these at a particular time – which is, of course, unacceptable.\footnote{15} Holland remarks that ‘since Christ’s embodiment caused him to experience many things such as thirst and hunger, it would be difficult, then, to…avoid the unwieldy conclusion:…[that] God the Son is eternally impassible and God the Son is eternally experiencing thirst and hunger’ (2012: 120).\footnote{16} I think that this is a highly problematic outcome, because it suggests that the Son, the alleged saviour of humankind, is eternally suffering.

I also think that the direction of explanation entertained here in fact runs backwards. It seems more natural to say that the Son timelessly experiences human thoughts and feelings as a result of being timelessly incarnate, rather than (as suggested above) that He’s timelessly incarnate as a result of His timelessly experiencing human thoughts and feelings. However, I’m now at a loss as to what does make true the Son’s timeless incarnation, for I’ve already considered the former grounding of the Son’s timeless humanity, and argued that He can’t be timelessly incarnate in virtue of the relation He bears

\footnote{15} Unless, as Leftow might say, B+S become united to the Son at a particular time, but the Son Himself is timeless. Even if this is the case, the Son would still have to be timelessly related B+S, and timelessly think any thoughts and feel any sensations that are due to His possession of a human body and soul (for example, hunger). Otherwise, if He came to have such thoughts at a particular time, this would represent an intrinsic change in His life, which would mean that He couldn’t be timeless.

\footnote{16} Holland is using ‘eternal’ here to designate timelessness, whereas in this thesis I use ‘eternal’ as open to contest between the temporal and atemporal accounts of God – that is, the nature of God’s ‘eternity’ is the very question up for debate here.
to His human body and soul. I argued against the timeless existence of the human parts of the divine composite. I also argued against the coherence of the Son's timeless relation to the temporal parts of the divine composite, when I criticised Leftow's brick wall analogy.

In spite of all this, the atemporalist might make the more general response that, because we're temporal creatures, we simply can't understand the picture of a timelessly incarnate God. Our lives are ubiquitously affected by sequence, to the extent that any analogies we draw, or arguments we make about divine timelessness will all be limited. This thought brings with it problems of its own, however.

Even granting that it’s timelessly true that the Son is fully human (the present reading of the perpetual humanity requirement*), an altogether different problem is brought to the surface, which threatens the atemporalist position as a whole. It has to do with what believers are unable to think and say about God. To many, it’s undoubtedly a great source of comfort and reassurance that when they pray to God, He’s listening at that very time, and that when He intervenes to answer a prayer, He does so after the prayer has been prayed. Similarly, it’s important to many believers that the Son is now, at this time, in Heaven, lest we detract from the permanence of the Resurrection. This isn’t something that the atemporalist can allow, because a timeless God can’t ‘now’ be anywhere. Hill himself acknowledges this. He says that:

[The atemporal view] does not leave any room for saying, for example, that Christ is currently seated at the right hand of the Father, as is stated in Ephesians 1:20….He cannot do that if his body exists only between 4 BCE and 30 CE. Similarly, the glorified Christ does not really have a glorified body, as Revelation 1:12–16 suggests, and one cannot hope to see Christ’s face in the new Jerusalem, as Revelation 22:4 promises (2012: 28).  

Atemporalists seem to have no option but to take statements such as these non-literally, and Hill agrees. Holland, too, says that ‘even though the creeds

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* Hill is assuming that these dates given are those of the Son’s life on earth. Henceforth, I’ll join him in assuming this.
and certain passages of Scripture speak of a sequence in the incarnation, the atemporalist must either read these statements as purely analogical and symbolic or reject them as outright untrue’ (2012: 124). However, I explained above that I’m interested only in assessing atemporalism for its ability to provide a metaphysical explanation of the glorification requirements. The atemporalist isn’t, I submit, able to assert that at this time the Son literally exists in Heaven in a fully glorified state, and that if we were to pray to Him, He’d hear our prayer at the time of praying it. This isn’t to say, of course, that we can’t rephrase these commitments in language amenable to the atemporalist, as we’ve seen Hill do with his glorification requirements. There is, however, a much wider set of everyday beliefs and commitments related to the glorification requirements that must also be reinterpreted in the language of the atemporalist – such as the belief that the Son is ‘now’ in heaven, or ‘now’ listening to my prayer. For example, the atemporalist would need to say that it’s ‘timelessly true’ (and hence, true now) that the Son is listening to my prayer. However, we’ve now come full circle back to the problems caused by postulating that it’s timelessly true that the Son is fully human – problems which, I’ve argued, look incredibly difficult for atemporalists to overcome.

(5) CONCLUSION

The literature on the metaphysics of the incarnation is almost entirely populated by discussions relating to the incoherence problem. The exaltation, and in particular the temporal metaphysics of the exaltation, is an element of the incarnation that’s almost completely unexplored – with the notable

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18 This is the case whether one is an A-theorist or a B-theorist. For A-theorists, a timeless Son can’t exist in Heaven at the moment that’s objectively present, because only temporal beings can exist in such a way. Similarly, for B-theorists, a timeless Son can’t exist in Heaven at the time simultaneous with this utterance (or at a time simultaneous with any utterance), because only temporal beings can exist in such a relation of simultaneity. To exist in B-theoretic time is, after all, to still be temporal. I’ll discuss the bearing that the debate over whether or not time flows has on the debate over God’s relation to time in more detail in Chapter 8.

19 I don’t have the scope to give these general arguments against the atemporalist position thorough treatment here. For arguments in favour of the importance of God hearing our prayers at the moment they’re prayed, see Lucas (1989: 217) and Everitt (2004: 270). For the more general argument that God ought to be able to respond to us at particular times, see Pike (1970: 128). See DeWeese (2004: 12) for the argument that a timeless God isn’t able to redeem us.
exception of Hill, whose recent paper has provided the basis for discussion here. In this chapter, I outlined the importance of the Son’s exaltation, together with Hill’s two (divine) glorification requirements, which he formulates in two different ways. I argued that the first formulation uses unacceptably temporal language to detail both requirements, and so the atemporalist can consider only the second formulation of the same. According to this, ‘it is true now’ that the Son is fully human, and exercises omnipotence and omniscience, which the atemporalist must understand as it being ‘timelessly true’ that the Son is fully human, omnipotent and omniscient. I conceded that atemporalists have no problem with accounting for the timeless truth of the Son’s omnipotence and omniscience, but I argued that the timeless truth of His humanity looks very difficult to uphold. This led me to discuss a related worry that can be employed against atemporalism as a whole – namely, that a God who exists at no times at all is difficult to think of as a reassuring presence.

I therefore conclude that divine timelessness isn’t compatible with an orthodox metaphysics of the incarnation. Although it can potentially account for the Son ‘becoming’ incarnate (by appealing to extrinsic change to the divine part of a composite), atemporalism is unable to avoid the incoherence problem, and can’t accommodate the exaltation to boot. In the next chapter, I’ll examine divine temporalism in relation to the Son’s glorification, arguing that (unlike atemporalism) it can accommodate Hill’s glorification requirements, and thus that it can accommodate the exaltation.
CHAPTER 6
DIVINE TEMPORALITY AND
THE EXALTATION

In this chapter, I argue that divine temporalists can accommodate both of Hill’s glorification requirements. These requirements (the ‘perpetual humanity’ and ‘exaltation’ requirements) were outlined in detail in the previous chapter. As with Chapter 4, I consider two forms of temporalist models of the incarnation: ‘two minds’ models and kenotic models. I firstly argue (briefly, given that in Chapter 4 they were already found to be lacking in other respects), that the two minds theorist can’t satisfy both of Hill’s requirements at once in a way that avoids heresy. I then turn to kenoticism, where I outline the alleged problem that kenoticists face in accommodating Hill’s perpetual humanity requirement. I argue that this problem is avoidable, and thus that kenoticists can comfortably account for the exaltation as a whole.

(1) TWO MINDS AND EXALTATION

In Chapter 4, I introduced in detail the two minds account of the incarnation, due to Morris (1986, 1989) and Swinburne (1994).\(^1\) By way of a brief recap, this is the model whereby the Son becomes incarnate by voluntarily adding a limited, fallible human mind to His omniscient divine mind. The

\(^1\) In fact, Swinburne’s ‘divided mind’ account is slightly different to Morris’s two minds model, because on the former account one single mind is divided between a ‘human’ and a ‘divine’ stream of consciousness. In Chapter 4, I discussed some potential differences between these two models, such as that Morris’s model alone can be consistent with a timeless God, because the incarnate Son has two distinct minds, which allows for the divine one to remain timeless and changeless. With Swinburne’s model, however, I suggested that the divine mind must undergo change in splitting to include a human stream of consciousness, which suggests that this model can only be consistent with a temporal God. In spite of this, for the purposes of this chapter the models are, for all intents and purposes, the same. As with the bulk of discussion in Chapter 4, I’ll therefore proceed to examine the ‘two minds model’, but I intend for all treatment of it to be likewise applicable to the divided mind account.
divine mind, being omniscient, is wholly aware of the existence of the human mind, and has access to its contents. The human mind, however, is unaware of the existence of the divine mind, and has very limited access to it – only when such access is permitted by the divine mind. We’ve seen that this model has been offered as a response to the incoherence problem: the incarnate Son is one person, but is wholly divine thanks to His divine mind, and wholly human thanks to His human mind. However, in Chapter 4, I argued that the two minds model can’t in fact avoid the incoherence problem, because to the extent that the minds are indeed separate causal centres, we unacceptably have two persons present in the incarnate Christ. On the other hand, if there’s only really one centre of causal powers, then the incarnate Son fails to be human, because He lacks a human will of His own: with the divine mind making all of His decisions.

I’ll now argue that the two minds model of the incarnation fares no better in meeting Hill’s two exaltation requirements. When we consider the exaltation requirement, we most naturally imagine two minds theorists claiming that they can uphold it thanks to the incarnate Son’s divine mind, which is omnipotent and omniscient. After all, this omnipotence and omniscience is always attributed to the Son by two minds theorists, even during His earthly life. There therefore seems to be no reason why He shouldn’t continue to be omniscient and omnipotent in His glorified state. Likewise, regarding the perpetual humanity requirement, we can assume that the likes of Morris and Swinburne would appeal to the Son’s human mind: claiming that it’s in virtue of this that the incarnate Son is fully human. All appears well and good, then. Moreover, unlike atemporalists, temporalists (and so, two minds theorists) can straightforwardly say that it’s ‘now’ the case that the Son is fully human, and in full possession of omnipotence and omniscience, because God exists at every moment of time, and (whereas He was incarnate on earth), He’s now, at this very moment, incarnate in Heaven.

However, I don’t think that matters are as straightforward for the two minds theorist as they first seem. This is due to problems that are almost

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2 Interestingly, Morris often refers to the Son’s human mind as His ‘earthly’ mind (1989: 121), which suggests that he doesn’t think this mind continues to exist when the Son is exalted and no longer living on earth. However, I’ll give Morris the benefit of the doubt here, because he may simply be saying that the Son’s human mind resembles our (earthly) minds.
identical to the ones that I argued were detrimental to the account in relation to the incoherence problem. They emerge when we start to consider whether the one single person that is the exalted Son is omniscient and omnipotent, and whether that very same person is – and can be – human. In fact, if we assume that the two minds model works in exactly the same way as it’s alleged to work whilst the Son is incarnate on earth, then we find all of the problems from Chapter 4 resurfacing. I argued that the problem facing two minds theorists takes the form of a dilemma (either the two minds are genuinely distinct, meaning that there are two persons in Christ and we’re guilty of Nestorian heresy, or the minds aren’t genuinely distinct, meaning that the incarnate Son’s humanity is threatened and we’re guilty of Apollinarian heresy).

Regarding the exaltation, it seems that the two minds theorist might have an escape route available that was not possible in light of the incoherence problem. This is to argue that the second horn of the above dilemma can be blunted. That is, the two minds are no longer genuinely distinct, because the Son has been glorified, but the Son’s humanity isn’t threatened, for a reason which I’ll shortly suggest. Whilst it was important that the two minds be separate streams of consciousness during the incarnate Son’s earthly life in order that the Son take on true human form and live as we do, once He’s been glorified the minds can (perhaps even as part of this glorification process) become more unified. This may be supported by Brown, in his discussion of what he calls ‘two-nature Christology’, which is certainly consistent with a two minds account. Brown says:

Complete integration [of the divine and human natures] is only delayed, not permanently impossible, and there is a clear rationale for the delay, so that the human mind can exercise normally its faculty for the

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3 Brown uses ‘two-nature Christology’ to encompass all models of the incarnation which allow for i) Christ to be a single person, ii) Christ to possess a fully human and a fully divine nature, and (importantly), iii) these two natures to be simultaneously present in the person of Christ (1985: 228). Two minds theorists would therefore claim that they can meet these criteria, in virtue of the divine and human minds (and so, natures) being simultaneously present in the person of Christ. Interestingly, Brown thinks that kenotic models can’t meet the third of these criteria: He thinks that according to kenoticism the two natures (divine and human) are successively present in the person of Christ (ibid.: 232), because the divine nature is given up when the Son becomes human. My argument in Chapter 4 was that divinity and humanity are in fact simultaneously present in Christ on kenoticism, thanks to a particular modification of the divine attributes. I’d therefore allege that kenoticism is also a type of two-nature Christology.
experiential acquisition of knowledge. At the last stage in Heaven the objection to infused knowledge experientially acquired on earth will justify us in continuing to speak of the presence of a human mind (1985: 260).

The two minds theorist could therefore argue along these lines that the Son possesses two distinct minds whilst He’s incarnate in order that His human mind experience the world as we humans do. However, once He’s exalted His minds will unite.

However, it remains for the two minds theorist to provide more detail regarding exactly how united these two minds of the exalted Son are to be. We’re owed this further explanation not least in order to be able to tell whether this interpretation of the two minds model can account for the exaltation and perpetual humanity requirements. After all, it’s one thing to say that the Son’s divine and human minds become united when He’s exalted, but quite another to demonstrate how this single mind is now able to be omniscient, omnipotent, and fully human. In particular, we might legitimately question whether or not the human mind becomes aware of its divinity when it’s exalted. Recall that, according to the two minds theorist’s alleged solution to the incoherence problem, the human mind is (for the most part) ignorant of its divinity throughout the Son’s earthly life, and it’s only permitted limited (and even then, unknowing), access to the divine mind when the divine mind permits this.

On the one hand, two minds theorists could claim that the human mind (due to being exalted) does become aware of its union with the divine mind, and comes to possess omnipotence and omniscience. However, this seems to compromise the humanity of Christ. At the very least, the two minds theorist would need to have more of a story about exactly how, if the Son is exalted, and in possession of omniscience and omnipotence, He can count as fully human. If His human mind has become so closely united with the divine mind that He’s wholly aware of His omniscience and omnipotence, we need to hear some more about what specifically makes that human mind human, if we’re to satisfactorily meet the perpetual humanity requirement. One option might be to appeal to the Son’s possession of experiential knowledge from His
time on earth – the knowledge of ‘what it’s like’ to be (a particular) human, and to (for instance) lack knowledge of certain things.\(^4\) This was suggested by Brown in the previous citation, and is certainly a route that the two minds theorist could explore. I’ll also discuss (and endorse) this line of argument in relation to kenoticism in section 3.

However, it strikes me that to whatever extent the two minds theorist appeals to the Son’s exalted divine and human minds being united, even granting that they have a story about how the Son can remain human, we’ve now departed from a two minds model of the incarnation anyway. Rather, we’re instead looking at a picture of a ‘united’ exalted mind of Christ, which seems to be almost the very antithesis of the two minds view. The two minds theorist might respond that this is exactly how they intend to model the incarnation: the Son possesses a divine and a human mind whilst living on earth only: but these minds unite into one when He becomes glorified, in such a way that the Son retains both their divine and their human aspects. This is all well and good, but it’s an account of the exaltation which is by no means unique to the two minds model. For instance, as mentioned, I’ll shortly outline how the kenoticist can appeal to it. Therefore, I would therefor consider this ‘united mind’ account of the exaltation to be an unacceptably hollow triumph for the two minds theorist. At the very least, even granting that this account is equally available to the two minds theorist and to the kenoticist, I argued in Chapter 4 that there are other reasons for us to prefer the latter account to the former.

Alternatively, then, the two minds theorist could propose that when the Son is exalted, His human mind remains limited in knowledge, and thus ignorant of its exalted, divine state. Hill worries that to take this stance would be to fail to meet the exaltation requirement, because ‘the Son does not enjoy his divine properties in the requisite way’ (ibid.: 17), since His human mind remains limited in knowledge. This is also problematic because we evidently want the human Jesus to know that He’s been glorified (as we’d similarly desire for ourselves), rather than His human mind existing, as Hill suggests, ‘in some kind of solipsistic world of its own’ (ibid.). Moreover, this latter account keeps

\(^4\) I’ll also consider an argument similar to this one in Chapter 8, when I examine what tenseless theorists of time might say about a temporal God remaining human once He’s exalted.
the two minds isolated such that the charge of Nestorianism returns: after all, two people in Christ is just as heretical in Heaven as it is on earth.

A final option available to the two minds theorist could be to claim that the Son remains human once exalted because of the particular relation that He bears to His human body. However, Hill warns of the problems that arise if one goes down the road of appealing to glorified embodiment in the physical, spatial sense that we typically understand it. For example, in endorsing the continued existence of the Son’s human body, one must be able to point to where that body exists at this very moment. Hill says:

To be orthodox, the model requires us to suppose that Jesus’s body continues to exist after the exaltation until the end of time; that at any given time, including right now, the statement ‘Jesus’s human body exists somewhere today’ is true (2012: 15).

This is, after all, in line with the perpetual humanity requirement*, which specifies that it must be ‘true now’ that the Son is ‘fully human’, in addition to being fully divine. That is, if one claims that the Son’s physical embodiment makes Him human, then it must be ‘true now’ that He’s embodied. Hill outlines three potential options for where the Son’s body might be at this very moment, and suggests problems that face each of them. Option one is that His body is somewhere in our spatiotemporal universe, such as here on the Earth or on another planet. The highly problematic upshot of this, however, would be that we could in principle travel to the Son’s body (ibid.: 12). This leaves open the bizarre possibility of us getting closer or further away from the Son of God, simply by moving around through our daily routines.

The second option is that Christ’s body exists now, but in a sort of parallel space, one which it’s impossible to travel to. The problem here is that this parallel space would have to share our time in order for it to be true that Christ’s body exists there now, and for Him to be temporal in the sense that He shares our time series. This generates problems for our standard conception of the intimate connection between space and time, because we’re left imagining ‘a distinct space that nevertheless shares our time’ (ibid.: 13). Whether or not one thinks that the idea of a parallel space that happens to share the same time
as ours is conceivable, Hill’s second worry regarding this option has greater force. This is that it’s hard to see how the Son’s body, once existing in our space, could be identical to another body in the parallel space. It couldn’t move to the new location since there is no space between our space and the parallel space (ibid.). This leaves us imagining Jesus’ body disappearing in our space, and reappearing again in the other space. Hill asks ‘how would this scenario differ from one in which Jesus’ body is annihilated and a duplicate created in a parallel space?’ (ibid.).

The third option Hill proposes is that Jesus’ body might be in hyperspace (ibid.). He draws the comparison to the two-dimensional shapes in the novel Flatland (Abbott, 1952) being unable to conceive of a third dimension above them, and says that similarly there could be at least one other spatial dimension that we can’t perceive. The Son’s body would therefore be ‘above’ us, but not in any sense of ‘above’ with which we’re familiar. Unlike with the last theory, hyperspace would be a part of our universe, and thus we don’t have the problem of the Son’s body disappearing and reappearing in order to reach its new location, nor the resulting problems of the body’s identity. Rather, it would be possible for the body to follow a ‘continuous path’ (ibid.: 14) to its new location in hyperspace. This option, however, can be subjected to similar criticisms as the first one – it would, in theory, be possible for us to travel to this extra spatial dimension, meaning that this theory is just a ‘more exotic version’ (ibid.) of the first theory in which the Son’s body exists somewhere in the universe as we know it. Furthermore, Hill adds that it would be a (perhaps unacceptably) large claim to argue that Christians are required to believe in hyperspace in order to understand the metaphysics of the incarnation (ibid.), and for this reason it seems that an alternative option would be preferable.  

One such option could be to claim that the exalted Son possesses a non-physical, glorified body. This would dispel all problems with the above candidates for the physical location of the Son’s body. However, to the extent

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5 Assuming, of course, that Christians are ‘required’ to have an account of the metaphysics of the incarnation in the first place. This seems incredibly demanding, and therefore I think it best not to endorse this particular line of argument suggested by Hill. 
6 Exactly what such a body would be like is mysterious. I’ll discuss this a little more in section 3.2, explaining that I don’t want to place argumentative weight on any particular idea of a glorified body.
that the two minds theorist wishes to appeal to the Son’s glorified body as a guarantee of His humanity, she seems to be whittling away at the core of her theory. The Son is human qua human mind, on the traditional two minds model, so it seems strange to shift this emphasis onto a body after the Son is exalted. Indeed, it seems that we’d be departing from a central claim of the two minds model if we took this approach.

On top of all this, I argued in Chapter 4 that the two minds account faces insurmountable problems in attempting to avoid the incoherence problem. I therefore submit that Morris and Swinburne’s model is a problematic way to model the Son’s glorification. Fortunately for temporalists, however, there’s another account available, which I also favoured in Chapter 4. I’ll now argue that kenoticism has the means to account for the glorification requirements.

(2) KENOTICISM: THE CHALLENGE FROM GLORIFICATION

It appears that kenoticism has no problem in meeting the exaltation requirement. After all, when He’s glorified, the Son regains the attributes of omniscience and omnipotence that He voluntarily gave up when He became human, and continues to possess these for evermore. The problem arises when we consider whether kenoticism can accommodate the perpetual humanity requirement. In virtue of what, it might legitimately be asked, is the exalted Son human, according to kenoticism? This problem is particularly pertinent for those who maintain that a necessary condition of the Son’s becoming human is His very divestiture of omnipotence and omniscience.7

That is, in the same way that in Chapter 4 the main challenge to kenoticism was being able to account for the Son’s divinity whilst He was lacking omnipotence and omniscience on earth, the challenge that faces kenoticism here is being able to account for His humanity once He’s regained

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7 We’ll shortly see that this assumption has been challenged.
these two attributes. For this reason, Davis says that the exaltation appears to exhibit ‘a kind of necessary reverse ‘emptying’ in kenosis, where the glorified Logos, on returning to heaven, emptied itself of humanity’ (2006: 136). This emptying of humanity would be a most undesirable result, and would undoubtedly ensure that kenoticists are unable to meet the perpetual humanity requirement. Feenstra articulates the problem for the kenoticist as follows:

If the second person of the Trinity needed to become non-omniscient in order to become truly human and if his taking up his omniscience once again implies that he is no longer truly human, then it seems to follow that the exalted Son of God who is sitting at the right hand of the Father, and who is presumably omniscient, is no longer truly human (1989: 146).

If the Son’s omniscience was incompatible with His humanity during His earthly life, then this suggests that, once omniscience is restored to Him, He can’t satisfy the perpetual humanity requirement. I agree with Crisp that this poses a ‘serious problem’ (2007: 133) for kenoticism. Evans views the problem that kenoticism faces with regards to meeting the perpetual humanity requirement as one horn of a larger dilemma, which he poses as follows:

Either the glorified Christ re-assumes [omniscience and omnipotence] or he does not. If he does not, then the kenotic theory has an inadequate account of the glorified Christ, and the loss of omnipotence and omniscience is no longer merely a temporary divestiture but a permanent loss. If the glorified Christ does re-assume these properties, however, then it appears that there is no reason why an incarnate God cannot be omnipotent and omniscient… If a glorified, bodily Christ who is fully human can be omniscient and omnipotent, then one cannot claim that a being must divest himself of these properties to become human (2002: 264).

However, I argued in Chapter 4 that kenoticists are in fact able to adequately respond to the challenge that the Son can’t be divine when He’s given up omniscience and omnipotence.
We can see here that the alternative horn (to the one that I already outlined) of Evans’s dilemma is that the Son doesn’t in fact regain His omniscience and omnipotence when He’s exalted. I consider this option to be so problematic for the kenoticist that it’s a non-starter, not least because it can’t accommodate the exaltation requirement. On top of this, the ‘permanent loss’ of these divine attributes seems to go far beyond a loving sacrifice for the sake of humankind, into a genuine loss of divinity on the part of the Son. I also think that it detracts from His worshipfulness. Crisp comments that it’s ‘one thing to argue that the Word may relinquish certain properties for a period of time. It is quite another to claim that the Word relinquishes those properties and will never take them up again from that moment onwards’ (2007: 133-4). I certainly agree with this, and will therefore return only to considering the horn of the dilemma on which the exalted Son does regain omnipotence and omniscience.

Evans’s worry with this latter horn assumes that it is possible for an omniscient, omnipotent being to be fully human, and then questions why, if this is the case, the Son must nevertheless divest Himself of these divine properties in order to become human. In other words, assuming that the exalted Son can be omniscient and omnipotent as well as being human, we might as well also assume that there’s no incompatibility between these attributes during the Son’s earthly life. If this is the case, however, then it could be argued that we should just do away with kenoticism altogether. After all, this alleged incompatibility between ‘divine’ and ‘human’ attributes seems to be a large part of the motivation for kenoticism in the first place. Along these same lines, Crisp says that ‘some reason would need to be given to explain why it is that the pre-resurrection Christ may not possess omnipotence or omniscience, whereas the post-resurrection Christ (with a glorified body) may do so’ (2007: 136).

Crisp, like Evans, is worried that if we grant omnipotence and omniscience, and humanity to the exalted Son without any contradiction arising, we then need a good reason as to why we can’t grant the very same to the Son during His life on earth. Forrest voices the same worry when he asks:

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9 My ‘loss of divinity’ accusation here is consistent with my definition of essential divine attributes from Chapter 4. One example of such an attribute essentially possessed by a divine being was ‘omniscient-unless-freely-and-temporarily-choosing-to-be-otherwise’ (Morris 1986: 99, my italics). That is, any being that permanently divests itself of omniscience wouldn’t count as divine.
‘why should we abandon the classical account of the earthly life of Jesus if we are to assume just that account of his exalted life?’ (2000: 134). Unless we have a good reason for explaining why we have an incompatibility between divine and human attributes in the case of the earthly Son, but not in the case of the exalted Son, then this certainly seems to look like an ad hoc amendment to kenoticism. Furthermore, if we lack such a reason, it seems that much of the appeal of kenoticism is lost.

It’s been argued that the problem for the kenoticist in light of glorification gets off the ground due to this very assumption: that the Son must, of necessity, give up His omniscience and omnipotence in order to become human in the first place. The assumption relies on the thought that the Son’s omniscience and omnipotence are incompatible with His humanity, a thought which I first introduced at the end of Chapter 2, and endorsed in Chapter 4. Feenstra makes this explicit when he calls it a ‘premise’ of kenotic Christology that ‘Christ’s possession of omniscience during His life is incompatible with his being truly human’ (1989: 144). It seems (again) to be this assumption that leads Crisp to suggest that, if the Son is to remain human when He’s exalted, then ‘when at the incarnation the Word relinquished certain divine attributes, including omniscience, he relinquished them for ever’ (2007: 135). To take this latter stance would also incidentally be to become impaled on the first horn of Evans’s aforementioned dilemma.

In the sections that follow, I’ll respond to the challenge that the perpetual humanity requirement poses for kenoticism. What is more, my solution won’t require the kenoticist to give up the natural assumption of kenoticism (or, as Feenstra calls it, the ‘premise’), that omniscience and omnipotence are incompatible with humanity. In arguing that kenoticism can accommodate the perpetual humanity requirement, I’ll also respond to Hill’s claim that temporalist models of the incarnation don’t readily have the resources to account for the Son’s glorification. I’ll consider three different ways in which the kenoticist might claim to accommodate the perpetual humanity requirement. The first of these responses rejects the aforementioned assumption that the possession of omniscience and omnipotence is incompatible with humanity. The second one accepts the assumption only for the Son’s ‘becoming’ incarnate, but rejects it for His incarnate exaltation. The
third response accepts the assumption – and it’s this last response that I’ll argue provides kenoticists with the means by which to account for the Son’s glorification.

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(3) KENOTICISM EXALTED

(3.1) OPTION 1

The first way that kenoticists might attempt to accommodate the perpetual humanity requirement relies upon a distinction between the Son’s act of kenosis, on the one hand, and His incarnation, on the other. According to this account, kenosis is simply the particular way that the Son chose to become incarnate: when He made the decision to live as a human, He didn’t necessarily have to do this kenotically. Feenstra is the notable proponent of this view, and it seems that his account develops from holding fixed that the exalted Son can in fact be both human and omniscient and omnipotent, and then considering what story the kenoticist can tell about this. Feenstra says that ‘since the exaltation shows that Christ can be both truly human and omniscient, the incarnation need not involve his emptying himself of attributes such as omniscience’ (1989: 148). Feenstra adds that ‘the incarnation and the kenosis are conceptually, and to some extent temporally, distinct’ (ibid.). This qualification that the incarnation and kenosis are temporally distinct is offered because (allegedly) kenosis, the way the Son chose to become incarnate, lasts only for His earthly life, whereas the Son’s incarnation additionally continues throughout His exalted life. Similarly, Davis suggests that ‘the kenosis is indeed distinct from the incarnation, with the kenosis lasting only for the some thirty years of Jesus’ lifetime, and the incarnation lasting from the moment of Jesus’ conception to eternity’ (2006: 114).

This response would accommodate the perpetual humanity requirement because the Son can remain human when He’s glorified, even though the separate act of kenosis is over. Furthermore, kenoticists can also uphold the statement that it’s true ‘now’ that the Son is fully human as well as fully divine (the perpetual humanity requirement*). This is because, as Davis says, the statement that “[the] second person of the Trinity is God incarnate”
is after (say) 4 BC always true’, (2006: 114) – and so, is true now – ‘while the statement “the second person of the Trinity is kenotically incarnate” was only true from about 4 BC until about AD 29’ (ibid., my italics). In other words, it’s not true now, as I type this sentence, that the Son is kenotically incarnate, although He’s still incarnate. One might be tempted to object that, because the exalted Son remains incarnate, He must continue to be embodied, which in turn gives way to the various worries regarding the location of the exalted Son’s body that I outlined in section 1. It could be responded that after He’s exalted the Son instead possesses a glorified, non-physical body, to which we needn’t attribute a spatial location. I ruled this response out for the two minds theorist, because it’s central to her account that the Son is human qua human mind – not qua (glorified) body. There’s nothing to stop kenoticists from appealing to this response, however.

It’s important to note that this first option for the kenoticist flatly denies the assumption that a being’s omniscience and omnipotence are incompatible with its being human. The Son wasn’t required to give up His omnipotence and omniscience to become human, but rather He desired to do so to redeem humankind. An advantage of taking this stance is that it makes the Son’s ‘humiliating’ kenotic sacrifice even more humbling and loving. Not only did He choose to take on human form, but the Son chose to do so in a way that was extremely limiting to Him, even though this property divestment wasn’t required for incarnation. It could be argued that this choice not only to become incarnate, but to become incarnate in this maximally selfless and benevolent manner, responds to the worry I outlined earlier, whereby if there’s indeed no contradiction between being omniscient and omnipotent and being human, we may as well dispense with kenoticism altogether. To this worry, the kenoticist could respond that God, the most loving being imaginable, chose to become incarnate via kenosis because He wanted to truly share in our condition and live amongst us.

They could add that this choice makes God all the more praiseworthy, to a level that other models of the incarnation (where the earthly Son comfortably enjoys His omniscience and omnipotence) wouldn’t be able to attain. Feenstra comments on kenosis being freely chosen by the Son as His means of becoming incarnate: ‘in order to share our lot or condition during his
life on earth…He joins us in these [earthly] experiences, not simply because he is incarnate but by virtue of his kenotic self-emptying for the purpose of sharing our condition’ (1989: 148-9).

Similarly, Evans agrees with this. He says that:

God can be and could have become incarnate without emptying himself. Christ chose to become incarnate in a kenotic manner in order to fully share in our human lot or condition while on earth. On this view, God’s self-emptying is not necessary for incarnation (2002: 265).

Once this glorification has taken place, it could thus be maintained that although – because the Son is once again omnipotent and omniscient – kenosis ceases, His incarnation continues, and in virtue of this He’s human for evermore.

However, in spite of all of these suggestions, I don’t wish to endorse this option as a means of accounting for the compatibility of kenosis and Hill’s two requirements. In Chapter 4, I argued that an omniscient, omnipotent God on the one hand, and a limited human, on the other, were fundamentally incompatible. I stand by this view here, not least because of the extent to which I think it aligns with common sense to assert that a single (limited) human being can’t also be unlimited in power and knowledge. After all, it was this that led to my criticism and rejection of the two minds account, and it was what shaped much of my endorsement of kenoticism – because the latter account doesn’t attribute all of these attributes to the Son during His earthly life. Of course, kenoticism as I defended it does allow that the earthly Son is both divine and human at once (on pain of unorthodoxy), but I argued both that divinity in this case needn’t require omnipotence or omniscience (simpliciter), and that the lack of these latter attributes is in fact required as a partial guarantee of the Son’s humanity.

To argue (as Feenstra suggests) that the Son could have become incarnate in other ways besides kenosis would be contradicting the thought that a single being can’t at once be omniscient, omnipotent, and a human. Moreover, I think that this thought aligns with our intuitions – when we think about the spatial finitude of humans as we know them, it seems very difficult to imagine, for example, how a human brain could store the infinite amount of
knowledge that’s presumably a feature of omniscience. Humans as we know them are also embodied, as was the earthly Son, and we presume that there are also limits to the powers of these bodies. They must, plausibly, obey physical laws such that they’re (for instance) unable to travel faster than light. This limitation seems to be inconsistent with omnipotence. It therefore seems that it’s at least a common sense intuition to suppose that omniscience and omnipotence are incompatible with humanity.

However, it might be responded that the argument that the Son didn’t have to become incarnate via kenoticism doesn’t problematically attribute omniscience, omnipotence and humanity to the Son at once, because it qualifies omniscience and omnipotence in such a way that they’re compatible with humanity. This suggestion is due to Davis. Given that on kenoticism there’s a time in which the Son isn’t omniscient and omnipotent, Davis suggests that there’s no problem with these ‘modified’ divine attributes being compatible with the Son’s humanity. He says that the Son is ‘not now, as we might say, omnipotent and omniscient simpliciter. And I think those properties – being omnipotent and omniscient but not omnipotent and omniscient simpliciter – are indeed logically compatible with full humanity’ (2011: 129). Davis’s idea is that because the kenoticist already accepts some modification of the divine attributes (that they’re divested for a time) as part and parcel of her account, then she’s already acknowledged that the Son isn’t omniscient and omnipotent simpliciter. This is moreover consistent with my argument in Chapter 4 that the essential properties of divinity aren’t in fact omniscience and omnipotence simpliciter, but rather ‘omniscient-[and-omnipotent]-unless-freely-and-temporarily-choosing-to-be-otherwise’ (Morris 1986: 99). Davis then suggests that these ‘reconsidered’ divine attributes are indeed compatible with humanity. The kenoticist could therefore build upon the suggestion that the incarnation doesn’t of necessity require kenosis by claiming that the Son’s (modified) omniscience and omnipotence aren’t incompatible with His humanity.

My response here is that the way that omniscience and omnipotence are qualified by Morris (the qualification that I endorsed) isn’t the sort of qualification that will help to ease an incompatibility with humanity. I’m following Morris in specifying that omniscience and omnipotence are qualified in that they don’t have to be possessed by a divine being at all times: they can be
relinquished for a period if that divine being freely chooses to do so. Importantly, I’m not compromising the maximal amount of power and knowledge that an omniscient and omnipotent being has when it’s in possession of these attributes. This modification of the divine attributes therefore helps in the case of the earthly Son, because it enables Him to relinquish omniscience and omnipotence, and yet to still be divine (alongside being human). However, this modification fails to avoid the incompatibility that arises for the exalted Son between on the one hand, omniscience and omnipotence, and on the other, humanity. When the Son is exalted, He regains His omniscience and omnipotence, in the fullest sense possible, for these attributes are not to be diminished in any sense when a divine being is in possession of them. I suggested, however, that these attributes in their full senses are incompatible with being a limited human. For this reason, I contend that omniscience and omnipotence, when possessed, are incompatible with humanity, and this is therefore also the case for a being that possesses the former two attributes in the ‘unless-freely-and-temporarily-choosing-to-be-otherwise’ sense that I endorse. I’ll therefore explore alternative ways that the kenoticist might be able to meet Hill’s two glorification requirements.

(3.2) OPTION 2

There’s a second way for the kenoticist to respond to Crisp’s worry that we must be able to explain why omniscience and omnipotence aren’t incompatible with humanity when the Son is exalted, but they are incompatible when He’s living on earth. It retains an important insight from the previous response, which is the distinction between the Son’s act of kenosis, on the one hand, and His incarnation, on the other. The idea, suggested by Feenstra, is that kenosis is necessary for the Son to become human, but not for Him to be human. Feenstra says that:

Christ needed to empty himself of omniscience in order…to become truly human, but Christ can, once he is incarnate, regain this attribute without ceasing to possess true humanity. With this, the kenotic theory appears to have at least some reply to the criticism that it cannot accommodate an exalted Christ who is both omniscient and truly
human. This response depends, however, upon a premise that many might challenge: becoming incarnate, but not being incarnate, is incompatible with the possession of attributes such as omniscience (1989: 147).

This account, like the previous one, assumes that kenosis is distinct from the incarnation: kenosis may have been required as the Son’s means of becoming incarnate, but once this has happened it’s no longer needed to ensure that He remains incarnate. It’s also important to note that this account accepts the assumption that omniscience and omnipotence are incompatible with humanity when the Son becomes incarnate, but then rejects it for the rest of the incarnation, including glorification. To be clear, there are two possible readings of the phrase ‘kenosis is necessary for the Son to be incarnate now’. It could mean (i) kenosis must necessarily continue to obtain in order for the Son to be incarnate now, or (ii) kenosis must necessarily have initially obtained in order for the Son to be incarnate now. The former interpretation is what Feenstra denies. Rather, he accepts the latter: kenosis is necessary for becoming, and not being, incarnate. In other words, kenosis is indeed a necessary precondition for being incarnate, but it’s not required in order for the incarnation to then continue – which is no problem for Feenstra’s claim, because of course this is exactly what he suggests: kenosis is necessary to ‘become’, but not to ‘be’ incarnate. This could also be illustrated with an analogy of becoming a father. For someone to become a father, it’s necessary that they cease to be celibate, but then they could be celibate again and yet continue to be a father. Similarly, it could be argued that to become incarnate, kenosis is necessary, but – following this – kenosis can be relinquished and the incarnation can nevertheless continue.

One way to respond here could be to insist on the disanalogy between becoming a father and becoming human, such that one can’t make the above comparison. It might be, for example, that whilst fatherhood is a status that can’t be lost once it has obtained, humanity can be relinquished if certain conditions fail to obtain. In Chapter 2, after all, I argued that the Son is ‘accidentally’ (not essentially) a member of the natural kind ‘human person’. Furthermore, if humanity can’t be relinquished once it’s been taken on, then
there would be no need for me to argue a case for the Son’s perpetual humanity when He’s exalted – His humanity would instead be a given.

Moreover, I think a better way to respond to Feenstra’s suggestion that kenosis is necessary for becoming, but not for being, incarnate, is to examine the very motivations for this claim. Unlike with the first suggestion that kenosis isn’t required for incarnation, here there’s at least a reason for stating that the exalted Son can be omniscient, omnipotent and human, whereas this can’t be the case during His earthly life. This reason is that the initial act of the Son’s ‘becoming’ incarnate requires, of necessity, that He lack omniscience and omnipotence, whereas the state of ‘being’ incarnate doesn’t require this. However, what’s the reason for this speculation? It might be argued that it appears an ad hoc amendment to kenoticism. Feenstra himself, after all, suspects that it might be accused of being a ‘futile and contrived attempt’ (ibid.: 147) to rescue kenoticism. Evans also shares this worry. He says that ‘if it is possible to be embodied and have these qualities, it is hard to see why it would not be possible to become embodied with these qualities’ (2002: 264-5).

Evans has suggested a response to this worry, and it involves appealing to the (limited) human body that the Son takes on when He becomes incarnate. He says:

It seems plausible that if the Son decided to live as a bodily human being, living his mental life as other humans do through the physical processes that occur in the brain and central nervous system, then he would be deciding to accept limitations (2006: 201).

This certainly gives credence to the idea that kenosis is required for this act of taking on a limited human body, for it indeed seems difficult to imagine how an ordinary body can be both omniscient and omnipotent, as I also suggested earlier.10 In contrast, Evans says that when the Son is exalted (and yet, still incarnate), His body is glorified, in such a way that it ‘differs dramatically from our ordinary human bodies’ (ibid.: 201). In light of this, Evans speculates that ‘Christ’s incarnation in an ordinary human body may have required a kenosis,

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10 I also outlined this worry in Chapter 2.
but the kind of body he possesses in his glorified state may be compatible with the reassumption of all the traditional theistic properties’ (ibid.: 201-2).¹¹

If this route is to be taken, one might reasonably demand to know more about the nature of a glorified body. If such a body is non-spatial, then calling it a glorified body seems to be something of an oxymoron. If it is alleged to be spatial, however, all of the worries regarding the present location of this body (worries I outlined in section 1) resurface. Furthermore, one might not want to part with a glorified body (whether or not it’s spatial) because of the importance of bodily resurrection to glorification. I don’t want to place any argumentative weight on this notion of the Son’s glorified body, but I do want to note that kenoticists have the option of appealing to it. They would, however, need to tell us more about what this body is like.

Even granting Evans that the Son’s glorified human body (if indeed He possesses one) doesn’t conflict with His being omniscient and omnipotent, the Son nevertheless possesses His limited body for a significant amount of time after He’s ‘become’ incarnate – for His entire earthly life, no less. He’s not ‘becoming’ incarnate throughout this time, but rather ‘being’ incarnate: living as a human being. If there’s an incompatibility between the Son’s possession of a limited body and His divine properties when He becomes incarnate, therefore, then I see no reason why this incompatibility wouldn’t remain for as long as the Son continues to possess this body. What is more, to argue that the Son can be omniscient, omnipotent and human without any contradiction once He has ‘become’ incarnate is also once again to deny my assumption in Chapter 4 that a single being cannot be omniscient, omnipotent and at the same time genuinely human. For these reasons combined, I don’t think that appealing to the necessity of kenosis for ‘becoming’, but not for ‘being’ incarnate is a viable way to make sense of the Son’s perpetual humanity when He’s exalted.

¹¹ Incidentally, this links with my account of ‘glorified’ humanity which I’ll discuss in the subsequent section, although I won’t argue that this glorified body is necessary for exaltation.
Fortunately, I think there’s a final way that the kenoticist can accommodate Hill’s two glorification requirements. Consistently with my arguments in Chapter 4, this line of argument also accepts the assumption that omniscience and omnipotence are of necessity incompatible with humanity. This was the assumption that we earlier saw dubbed a ‘premise’ of kenotic Christology by Feenstra, which further emphasises its presumed importance to kenoticism. Again, it’s worth noting that this ‘premise’ doesn’t mean that divinity is incompatible with humanity, which would be unorthodox. Rather, it means only that omniscience and omnipotence simpliciter aren’t necessary for being divine. I think the kenoticist could claim that the glorified Son is in full possession of omnipotence and omniscience, and remains human, thanks to a particular qualification of what we mean by ‘human’.

The perpetual humanity requirement can be met, I submit, by maintaining that the Son is still human because He was human – during His earthly life. In an earlier paper to the one that’s formed a springboard for this chapter, Hill suggests that the kenoticist might employ just such an argument to account for the Son’s divinity while He’s on earth. He suggests that the kenoticist could:

…accept that the incarnate Christ does lack essential divine properties, but still counts as divine in a secondary sort of sense because he was divine—rather as former US presidents are still addressed as ‘Mr President’ despite no longer having the powers of office (2011: 18).

This response could likewise be applied as a guarantee of the Son’s humanity when He’s exalted. It could be made more sophisticated by appealing to the phase sortals of the Son’s life. Crisp hints at something like this when he says that there might be certain divine attributes that are ‘phase-essential’ (2007: 138) to the Son’s life: ‘that is, essential to certain phases of the life of the Word, rather as a tadpole may have certain essential properties that a frog does not’ (ibid.). The kenoticist might therefore argue that the Son’s human properties (such as lacking knowledge and power), are ‘phase essential’ to Him: they’re only required during the part of His life in which He lives as a human on earth,
where He experienced human limitations and temptations as a result of this lack of knowledge. The kenoticist could also argue that during this part of His life the Son experiences (increased) empathy for the human race, which will remain with Him when He’s glorified. If the Son hadn’t become incarnate as a human, He’d never have come to possess such a deep level of empathy for the human race.

Importantly, this added knowledge that comes from empathy doesn’t have to mean that the Son wasn’t omniscient prior to the incarnation. Rather, one can argue that when unincarnate He knew all of the propositional knowledge that was to be known, and merely added to His experiential knowledge in the incarnation – namely, the knowledge of ‘what it’s like’ to be human. We can compare this with Mary the colour scientist coming to leave her black and white room, as she does in Frank Jackson’s famous thought experiment (1982: 127-36). Even though in her room Mary knows all the propositional facts about seeing colour, upon leaving it she learns what it’s like to experience colour.

In fact, it might not even be that the Son gains experiential knowledge at all in becoming incarnate. Linda Zagzebski, in discussing Mary the colour scientist, says:

I do not assume that when Mary leaves her black-and-white room and begins to see in colour, she comes to know something she did not know previously. Although what it is like to see in colour differs from what it is like to see in black and white, the difference may not be a difference in what one knows. It might not even be an epistemic difference. Nonetheless, Mary’s mental state after she leaves the room differs from her state before she leaves the room. Everyone agrees about that (2008: 233).

In line with Zagzebski, we can argue that the Son’s mental state differs when He experiences what it’s like to be human, and as such develops (increased)
empathy for the human race. We could then argue that this guarantees His humanity when He’s exalted.\textsuperscript{12}

Kenoticists could thus appeal to these phase sortals, and claim that the perpetual humanity requirement is met when the Son is exalted, because of the empathy, and perhaps added experiential knowledge, that His earthly life provided Him with. Christ retains this experience of what it’s like to be human when He’s exalted, and it’s therefore thanks to this prior phase of His life that He remains ‘experientially’ human when He’s glorified. This could be further supported by Brown, who suggests that the exalted Son’s human nature is retained as a result of His ‘remembered experience’ (1985: 234) of being incarnate on earth. This argument is similar to a response that I suggested for the two minds theorist in light of the Son’s glorification, which is also due to Brown – although I criticised it there for failing to preserve anything like ‘two minds’ in Christ.

I think that this final option for the kenoticist is promising. To expand, it could be argued that we can be human in either a ‘glorified’ or an ‘earthly’ sense. We’re born earthly humans, with limited bodies, susceptible to hunger and temptation. If we achieve salvation, though, we become glorified humans. In the case of the Son, who is divine as well as human, this means that He’s omniscient and omnipotent when He’s a glorified human. As for the rest of us, we perhaps possess more (although not unlimited) knowledge and power when glorified, and our glorified bodies (if we possess such things) needn’t be spatially located, unlike our earthly bodies.\textsuperscript{13} An important qualification to make here is that a necessary condition of being a glorified human is having been an earthly human – and so, possessing memories of what it’s like to live as a limited human on earth.\textsuperscript{14} On this account, therefore, the relevant phase sortals

\textsuperscript{12} In Chapter 3, I considered this as a way for atemporalists to claim that the Son’s relation to B+S is different to His relation with every other human. I argued that they’re unable to make such an argument because it requires the Son’s life to be temporal.
\textsuperscript{13} I say ‘if’ we possess glorified bodies because I’ve mentioned that I want to remain neutral regarding whether the possession of a glorified body is necessary for glorification. If the kenoticist wishes to appeal to the Son’s glorified body, she owes us an account of what such a body is like.
\textsuperscript{14} This distinction between earthly and glorified humanity meshes well with the separate distinction (due to Morris) that I made in Chapters 2 and 4, between being ‘merely’ and ‘fully’ human. It could be argued that we mere humans can be either glorified or earthly humans. The Son, being fully divine as well as fully human, can be either a glorified or an earthly human, but if He’s the former He can also be omniscient and omnipotent, thanks to His divinity.
of the Son’s life would be ‘earthly human’ and ‘glorified human’ – with, for instance, limited knowledge and power being phase essential to the former sortals, but not the latter.\textsuperscript{15}

As aforementioned, this solution also endorses the assumption that the possession of omnipotence and omniscience are incompatible with being human – it simply qualifies ‘being human’ in the case of this incompatibility as meaning ‘being \textit{ontologically} human’, which is indeed flatly incompatible with being omniscient and omnipotent. At least, if this incompatibility didn’t exist, there’d be no need for this argument at all, because the exalted Son could be ontologically human at the times that He’s glorified. This is to be expected, given my endorsement of the ‘incoherence problem’ that arises when omnipotence and omniscience, alongside (ontological) humanity, are attributed to the same being at the same time. This proposed solution maintains instead that the exalted Son is omnipotent, omniscient, and \textit{experientially} human: human in virtue of His memories and experiences of living as an earthly human. It maintains that there’s no incompatibility in this case.

It could be responded here that it’s not enough that the Son has this ‘experiential’ humanity when He’s exalted, for we want Him to be genuinely, \textit{ontologically} human when glorified. That is, we don’t want Him to merely count as human because He once was human, or can remember the experience of being human. In a similar vein, Feenstra responds directly to Brown’s suggestion that the exalted Son is human thanks to His memories. He says that Brown’s theory ‘seems to be an alternative to, rather than an interpretation of, the Chalcedonian two-natures doctrine’, (1989: 145) and that it ‘leaves no room for the \textit{continuing} humanity of the exalted Christ’ (ibid., my italics). An important constraint on my account of the incarnation is of course that it remains within the confines of orthodoxy, and it could be argued that this ‘experiential’ account of the exalted Son’s humanity seems to be stretching orthodoxy dangerously close to breaking point. Furthermore, it seems that if the exalted Son isn’t ontologically human, then believers wouldn’t be

\textsuperscript{15} Incidentally, it’s important to know that ‘divine’ isn’t a phase sortal, because divinity is something that’s possessed essentially: it can’t be taken on and it can’t be given up. This is in line with my discussion in Chapter 2, around the idea that the Son is essentially a member of the (super)natural kind ‘divine person’ – or, at least, that He essentially possess His \textit{individual} divine essence.
warranted to believe of themselves and their loved ones that they’ll one day be glorified.

I’d respond to this latter objection by highlighting the important difference between our glorification and the Son’s glorification. We mere humans, unlike the Son, don’t become omnipotent and omniscient when we’re glorified. Granting this, it seems that we can hope for glorification as (ontological) humans, because we (unlike the Son) don’t possess omniscience and omnipotence, so there’s no incompatibility present in the notion of our being raised in glory. Of course, it remains the case that we wouldn’t be able to achieve salvation at all (even if there exists no contradiction between our humanity and the way in which we’re glorified) unless the Son Himself has been glorified, but I’m suggesting that the Son is glorified as an experiential human, which allows that He can also be omnipotent and omniscient. The Son’s glorification then paves the way for our glorification as ontological humans. Granted, once we’re glorified we may perhaps be more knowledgeable and powerful than we were on earth, but we’re certainly not omniscient or omnipotent like the exalted Son, so there’s no threat of a contradiction between our knowledge and power, on the one hand, and our humanity, on the other.

In response to the more general objection that I’ve attributed to the Son an unacceptably weak sense of humanity, I want to firstly re-stress that in order to be experientially human, it’s necessary that one have been ontologically human. This makes experiential humanity far less cheap to achieve. Furthermore, I venture that we wouldn’t want all of Christ’s ontological human attributes (such as His falsely believing that it’s possible for Him to sin, and His being limited in power such that He’s incapable of responding to our prayers) to remain when He’s exalted. Rather, I think that we desire a perfect sense of humanity for the exalted Son: one in which (though He recalls exactly what it’s like to be human and be limited) He’s nonetheless back in possession of omniscience and omnipotence.
(4) CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined how temporalists might account for Hill’s two constraints upon an acceptable account of the exaltation. I considered two kinds of temporalist models, arguing firstly that two minds models can’t accommodate the Son’s glorification. I next considered kenoticism, which appears at first to be incompatible with glorification, because of its alleged failure to meet Hill’s perpetual humanity requirement. I argued that this alleged incompatibility arises because of an assumption that kenoticists are committed to: the impossibility of an omnipotent and omniscient being that’s also human. I outlined two kenotic arguments that either fully, or partially, reject this assumption. The gist of these was that kenoticists can maintain that (for either part of, or all of, His incarnation), the Son didn’t need to be kenotically incarnate in order to be incarnate. However, I argued against these two accounts. Instead, I defended the view that the exalted Son is in full possession of omniscience and omnipotence, and is experientially human thanks to His memories of what it’s like to live on earth as a limited human. In defending kenoticism, I argued against Hill’s contention that ‘no temporalist model of the incarnation can easily meet [the exaltation and perpetual humanity requirements]’ (2012: 22).

To sum up the state of play so far, then: Part one concluded that divine temporalism and atemporalism were able to (at least provisionally) account for the Son becoming incarnate. However, kenoticism (and, in virtue of this, divine temporalism), was championed in Parts two and three. I therefore conclude that prioritising an orthodox account of the incarnation of the Son of God strongly suggests that God Himself is temporal. This is without a doubt a significant result for those interested in whether and how a Christian God relates to time. I’ll now deepen this finding by considering debates about the metaphysics of time itself. After all, it’s all very well to say that God exists inside of time, but how are we to understand time’s nature? Furthermore, what

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16 One might object that my response to Hill is still one whereby temporalism doesn’t ‘easily’ meet the exaltation and perpetual humanity requirements. It’s evident that Hill is confident that things are far more difficult for the temporalist than I’ve argued here, however. He says that temporalist models ‘struggle’ (2012: 3) to accommodate the glorification requirements, discussing different variants of temporalist models in turn, and dismissing each. I’m confident that my argument here makes things far easier, and far less of a struggle, than Hill would allege for temporalists.
is it to exist ‘inside’ of time? These considerations will be the subject of the final part of the thesis, which will in turn provide us with deeper insights into the exact nature of God’s temporality.
PART IV) REFLECTIONS FROM THE METAPHYSICS OF TIME

Having now examined three important elements of the incarnation and how they shape our view of God’s relation to time, the final part of this thesis takes a step back, examining debates about the nature of time itself. Incarnational considerations have revealed that God is best understood as temporal, but the picture of God’s temporality can look quite different depending upon the metaphysics of time that we’re working with.

In Chapter 7 I outline the substantivalism vs. relationism debate. I consider (and endorse) the thought that in the history of the debate over God’s relation to time, substantivalist assumptions have been all too readily in play. I instead examine a potential relationist picture of the incarnation due to Le Poidevin, which allegedly allows for us to uphold at once two senses of God’s atemporality and one of His temporality. I argue that these senses of atemporality are riddled with problems. However, I venture that Le Poidevin’s sense of a temporal God is one that’s uniquely available to relationists. This result provides independent support for my argument thus far: the temporal God that has emerged victorious in the first 3 parts of my thesis is one that can be understood whether time is substantival or relational.

In Chapter 8, I consider the tensed vs. tenseless debate about the nature of time. I argue that in the history of the debate about divine eternity, a timeless God has almost exclusively been assumed to exist outside of tenseless time, and a temporal God to exist inside of tensed time. I consider how we might shake up these traditional pairings, firstly by examining Leftow’s suggestion that a timeless God can exist outside of presentist time. I argue that this picture is incoherent, and I also argue – for good measure – that a timeless God additionally can’t exist outside of Growing Block time or Moving
Spotlight time. I next consider the alternative way of revising the traditional pairings: a temporal God existing within tenseless time. I argue that this is a coherent picture, and that it has independent benefits to boot. It therefore ought to be taken seriously in the future debate. This chapter therefore strengthens my argument that a temporal God is the best way to understand divine eternity in light of incarnational commitments. That is, if God is atemporal, we’re forced into time being tenseless on pain of incoherence, whereas if God is temporal, we’re free to adhere to either a tensed or a tenseless view of time.

Henceforth, although I’ll continue with a Christian God firmly in mind in order to shed important light on the foregoing discussion, I venture that these chapters have wider ramifications. As well as considering how my previous arguments might look depending upon one’s metaphysics of time, a broader conversation is also being had here, regarding how the metaphysics of time affects our idea of God’s eternity – where, I think, ‘God’ can potentially be understood as a God of theism in general.
CHAPTER 7
A RELATIONIST ‘TERNIUM QUID?’

Hitherto, my exploration of the (a)temporal metaphysics of the incarnation has rested on certain assumptions about the nature of time itself. I’ve been contrasting two popular, conflicting and well-rehearsed views regarding God’s relation to time: divine temporality and divine atemporality. These indeed appear exhaustive, for one might wonder how else God can exist if not ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ of time. Mullins certainly agrees that there are no other (a)temporal modes of existence on offer:

Trying to find a third way is like hunting for snipe and haggis: it is a futile hunt because it is nothing more than a trick perpetrated on the uninformed. When it comes to whether God is temporal or atemporal, there is simply no third way. The two positions are logically contradictory…there are no other options (2016: xvi).1

Contra Mullins, I’ll argue that divine atemporality and divine temporality don’t, in fact, present an exhaustive dichotomy, because they rest on substantivalist assumptions about the nature of time. This chapter looks again at the ontological status of time, examining how going relationist can shed new light onto this ancient debate.

Section 1 illustrates substantivalism and its commitments, before explaining where and how it’s been assumed in previous debates over God’s relation to time. I then elucidate the opposing view: temporal relationism. Section 2 argues that abandoning our substantivalist assumptions in favour of

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1 Snipe are wading birds that are notoriously difficult to hunt due to their excellent camouflage and erratic flying style. ‘Going on a snipe hunt’ is therefore a phrase used to describe attempting a near impossible task. Hunting haggis would, of course, be an even more futile pursuit.
relationism gives us a very different picture of God’s relation to time: one which has hitherto received little consideration. In fact, Le Poidevin is, to my knowledge, the only author to have explicitly attempted to flesh out the relationist position in any substantial way, and he does so specifically with the incarnation in mind. He postulates three different ways in which God relates to time – two of which are forms of atemporality, and one of which is a form of temporality. I explain that because Le Poidevin’s relationism is ‘radically reductionist’ (I call his position ‘RR-relationism’), all of these positions are allegedly attributable to the very same being at once. Explicating Le Poidevin’s account in section 3, I suggest that his single commitment to God’s temporality is novel and coherent. Nevertheless, Le Poidevin’s three commitments, when held together, are incoherent. This is due to the problems with each of his two commitments to divine atemporality. I argue that one of these commitments is heavily dependent on the other for its credibility (section 4), and that the commitment being relied upon is itself internally problematic (section 5). Furthermore, I present an argument that Le Poidevin’s latter two aspects of divine atemporality are in fact at odds with each other in worrying ways (section 6). In section 7, I consider briefly how we might now make sense of an RR-relationist, kenotic incarnation, arguing that there’s nothing stopping temporalists from claiming that the Son of God became incarnate ‘in’ RR-relationist time. This is due to the coherence of Le Poidevin’s novel commitment to divine temporality. I reflect again upon this commitment, explaining that it reinforces my main argument in this thesis. That is, this foray into the relationist and substantivalist debates generates a further reason why (a sense of) divine temporality ought to be preferred over divine atemporality. This is because divine temporality alone is compatible with RR-relationism and substantivalism.

(1) SUBSTANTIvalIST SUPPOSITIONS

According to temporal substantivalism, time is like a container in which everything else occurs or exists. ² Time, then, is an entity which exists

² Given considerations arising from the Special and General theories of relativity, it’s become more common to speak of space and time as unified into a single entity:
independently of the events that occupy it: it would exist whether or not any events occurred at any of its instants. Furthermore, no event can exist without being simultaneous with some instant(s) of time. These commitments are at odds with relationism, which denies that time exists independently of its contents. Time, for the relationist, is: ‘nothing over and above temporal relations among events and things located in it….if there were no objects and events, there would be no time, for time is not a thing…but rather a system of relations among events and things’ (Benovsky 2010: 491-2).

We therefore have two opposing views about the ontological status of time. Depending upon whether we frame the question of God’s relation to time in relationist or substantivalist terms, the issue appears quite different. For the substantivalist, it’s something like: *What’s God’s relation to time, where time is something that exists independently of the events and entities that occupy it?* For the relationist, it’s more like: *What’s God’s relation to time, where time is nothing over and above the system of particular relations between events and entities?* Making explicit these understandings helps us to see that a substantivalist and a relationist pondering God’s relation to time are in fact considering quite different issues. However, it appears that throughout the course of the debate over God’s relation to time, substantivalism has all too often been assumed, and yet there have been no explicit substantivalist cards on the table.

One way in which substantivalism has been assumed is by framing the question of God’s relation to time as a matter of whether He exists ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ of it. For instance, Pike (1970:10) references Anselm commenting that a timeless God can’t exist ‘now,’ because that being would be ‘contained’ by time (1958: 83). Swinburne discusses a timeless God in a similar way: ‘to say that God is eternal is to say that he is timeless, that he exists outside the ‘stream’ of time. His actions are timeless, although they have their effects in time’ (1977: 216). Leftow has been a prominent figure in the preceding chapters, so it’s only fitting to include a similar comment from him. In discussing what atemporalists (such as himself) mean when they talk of God ‘existing’, Leftow

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‘spacetime.’ I’ll continue to consider the debate in terms of substantivalism versus relationism about time alone, but the debate is still intelligible when we consider it applying to a unified relativistic spacetime. I defer to Sklar (1974: 163-4) and Hoefer (1998: 452-466) here. Le Poidevin also uses the term ‘spacetime’ as one that’s *neutral* between relativistic and non-relativistic theories – suggesting that he, too, considers the substantivalist vs. relationist debate to be intelligible in light of relativistic considerations (2017: 212).
says: ‘when I say truly that God exists, I, here (in time), say truly that God exists (over there, outside time)’ (2002: 275). Definitions of a temporal God are similar: Wolterstorff talks about God being ‘fundamentally in time’ (1982:95). Gregory E. Ganssle, too, says that a temporal God ‘exists at all times and through all times...he is in time’ (2002: 13).

In the above quotations, I’ve italicised the particular words and phrases that imply a substantivalist conception of time. Speaking of God as existing either ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ time lends itself to a conception of time as a sort of ‘container’ that we can be either within or without. Furthermore, speaking of existing ‘at’ a time suggests that time is an entity in itself, comprising independently existing points at which we can either exist or not exist.

Now, the relationist might insist that she finds nothing disagreeable about the nature of time in the above statements. After all, she could just as well say that God exists ‘outside’ time, but would simply insist that this means He isn’t a part of our structure of events and entities which themselves constitute a temporal structure. Similarly, to say that a timeless God doesn’t exist ‘at’ any time is, for the relationist, to say that neither He, nor any event in His life, is simultaneous with any other event or entity. What’s being denied by the relationist is that the debate hinges on whether or not God exists inside or outside time, where time is something that exists independently of events and entities. The relationist could therefore insist that, so long as we do indeed deny that time exists independently of events and entities, then any of the above quotations can be endorsed.

This is all well and good for the relationist, although arguably a substantivalist reading of these statements is still the more direct and straightforward one. Furthermore, once we move past initial definitions and consider arguments in favour of either God’s temporality or atemporality, we can see that many of these indeed rely for their force on substantivalist assumptions about the nature of time.

The first of these comes from Augustine: famously one of the first thinkers to ponder God’s relation to time. In response to the potential question of what God did before creating the universe, Augustine says: ‘How could innumerable ages pass over, which thyself hadst not made; thou being the author and creator of all ages? Or what times should these have been,
which were not made by thee?’ (1912: 235). Augustine is arguing that it’s nonsensical to question what God was doing before creation, because there can’t have been these times before creation unless God created them. Time seems to be an entity in itself, which God creates in its own right. This suggests that time exists independently of created events (albeit dependently on God). Again, it could be maintained that there’s nothing objectionable for the relationist in this passage. It could be in virtue of creating the universe and things in it that God created time – time simply being a construction from the relations between these created things. However, a substantivalist reading of the above is certainly more natural – for Augustine says that God made ‘times’ and ‘all ages’ – with there being nothing to qualify this as an indirect creation in virtue of His creation of other things such as entities and events.

A further way in which substantivalism has been assumed in the foregoing debate is when it’s argued that a temporal God would face a threat to His omnipotence due to somehow being ‘bound’ or ‘constrained’ by time. Zimmerman notes how substantivalist assumptions affect the debate over God’s omnipotence: ‘one frequently voiced objection to the thesis that God is in time is that it makes the deity subordinate to a created thing, namely, time itself…such worries would have considerable force for a theist committed to substantivalism about times’ (2002: 85).

It also seems that Leftow is employing these substantival assumptions when discussing problems with divine temporality. He argues that alternate time series are possible, and that a temporal God can’t create such a series. He says ‘hence if God is temporal, possibly there is a contingent entity He cannot create…accordingly, if God is temporal, He is not omnipotent’ (1991: 273). This seems to place the ontological priority in a direction that favours the substantivalist: time is an ‘entity’ that can exist independently of its contents. Sturch, too, suggests that for God to be temporal is for Him to be in some sense constrained by time, as though time were an independently-existing entity. Sturch says that, because God is a being upon whom the whole universe

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3 For a time series to be genuinely alternate, or ‘discrete’ from ours, Leftow requires that no moments in it are simultaneous with (or earlier than or later than) any points of our time series. (1991: 21-22). The reason why Leftow argues that a temporal God can’t create an alternate time series is that it would be impossible for a being to participate in multiple (and genuinely discrete) time series. He says that ‘I cannot conceive of one mind having two nonsimultaneous experiences neither of which is earlier than the other’ (1991: 30).
depends for its existence, God ‘is surely most unlikely to be Himself time-bound’ (1991: 257).

I’ve suggested that many authors have been assuming substantivalism in their arguments and in their framing of the debate – or, at the very least, that a substantivalist interpretation of these arguments is the more straightforward reading of these. I’ll now show that even presenting the debate over God’s relation to time as being between divine temporality and divine atemporality, with no other options, is itself to be operating with substantivalist assumptions in play. I’ll argue that, if time is relational, new pictures of God’s possible relation to time emerge.

(2) RELATIONIST REVELATIONS

Numerous authors (including Mullins above) present the debate over God’s relation to time as a debate between two, and only two, positions – temporality and atemporality.4 Leftow argues that our relation to time is one we possess necessarily. He says ‘in no possible world can a timeless thing become temporal or a temporal thing become timeless’ (1991: 43). According to Leftow, there’s a gulf between the two positions so vast that timeless beings (necessarily) can’t cease to be so: ‘temporal and timeless beings will have to have properties so radically different as to make transworld identification of such beings implausible. The greater these differences, then, the more plausible it is that whatever is timeless is necessarily so’ (ibid.: 44).

With relationism, however, the picture is allegedly different, and positing a hybrid view doesn’t so obviously entail a contradiction. Unfortunately, however, relationist forays into God’s relation to time are extremely thin on the ground. William Lane Craig has briefly suggested that temporal relationism can help us to make sense of God being timeless until creation, at which point He enters into time. He says that, given relationism, ‘God would exist timelessly and independently prior to creation; at creation, which he has willed from eternity to appear temporally, time begins, and God

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subjects himself to time by being related to changing things’ (1978: 502). Craig isn’t himself a relationist (2001: 143-96), which is perhaps why he simply hints at how the relationist picture might look, without fleshing it out beyond the latter suggestion. This has left the position susceptible to attack – for instance, from Helm, who takes issue with a timeless God entering time: ‘there can be no temporal ‘and then’ for a timelessly eternal God’ (2014). This aligns with my argument in Chapter 1 that God can’t change intrinsically in order to become human, because this requires Him to be one way at one time, and a different way at a later time. Moreover, if a timeless being exists at any moment of time – even just one – then the being won’t be timeless after all.

It’s not obvious that Helm’s argument threatens Craig’s relationist position if the latter is properly understood: on a relationist account, for God to become temporal is simply for Him to come to be related to events. This doesn’t seem to necessarily require that there’s any sequence in God’s life, because it might be that (for example) God changes extrinsically when events come to be related to Him. Perhaps if Craig were to be clearer about what work relationism is doing here, he wouldn’t have invited criticisms such as Helm’s.

Holland also seems to be alluding to relationism as a way to understand God’s relation to time, but without directly naming the theory. He says:

> It does not…make sense to think of a material object being ‘contained’ within time as if time were a material vessel of some kind. When one makes reference to a year, it is not the case that the earth, while moving around the sun, is contained within the year; rather, the physical event in question marks out the year (ibid.: 168).

Holland is evidently denying that time exists independently of events, and yet doesn’t once mention relationism. On the other hand we have Craig, claiming that temporal relationism can explain the link between God, time, and creation – yet failing to flesh out his relationist account. Le Poidevin has therefore given us what’s long overdue: the first explicit and substantial attempt to examine

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5 After all, I allowed in Chapter 1, section 3 that if God changes merely extrinsically when \(B+S\) comes to be related to Him, he needn’t be temporal. I don’t see why this case is any different.
and model God’s relation to time by using temporal relationism. The subsequent section provides an overview of his argument.

(3) LE POIDEVIN’S RELATIONISM

On temporal relationism, all assertions such as ‘two minutes have elapsed’ and ‘the film starts in half an hour’ aren’t stating anything about time as an independently existing entity. Rather, these remarks ascribe temporal features to events, and the relations between them. Le Poidevin (2017) outlines a more specific form of relationism: ‘radically reductionist’ relationism (hereafter, RR-relationism). He argues that it presents us with an alternative account of God’s relation to time – one that’s neither strictly ‘atemporalist’ nor strictly ‘temporalist’. According to RR-relationism, ‘not only spatial points and temporal moments, but also spatial and temporal relations’ (ibid.: 213) are reduced to something more fundamental. In the case of time, temporal relations are reduced to causal ones, so ‘time, on this view, is simply the causal structure of events/states of affairs’ (ibid.) and ‘the arrow of time just is the arrow of causation’ (ibid.: 214). RR-relationism therefore goes a step further than standard relationism: it agrees that time is nothing over and above the temporal relations between events, and it asserts that all temporal relations between events can be reduced to causal ones. Of course, a successful reduction of the direction of time to the direction of causation isn’t an un-contested issue. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this argument I'll grant its coherence, because I want to examine whether, given a RR-relationism, we can make sense of God’s relation to time.

Le Poidevin outlines three distinct commitments to God’s relation to time: one to divine temporality, and two to divine atemporality. These can allegedly be upheld together, such that RR-relationism generates a ‘sense in which God is both outside time and within it’ (ibid: 219). Le Poidevin’s three commitments may be outlined as follows:

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6 Mellor (1991 & 1998) is a famous proponent of an influential argument in favour of the reduction of the arrow of time to the arrow of causation.
7 See, for example, Mackie (1980), and Harrington (2015, Chapter 7).
Derivative Divine Temporality (DDT): God is temporal in that He participates in events that either i) we, too, participate in, or ii) are causally connected with events that we participate in. It's the causal connections between events that we participate in that constitutes our time series.

Non-Derivative Divine Atemporality (NDA): God is a continuant, and continuants are timeless when considered in themselves.

Derivative Divine Atemporality (DDA): Part of God’s mental life can form a causal series which is causally (and so, temporally) isolated from the causal sequence that constitutes our time. In this sense God is derivatively timeless.

DDT is the idea that, for objects without temporal parts (‘continuants’), their temporality is only derivative – they’re temporal in virtue of participating in events and states of affairs (‘occurrents’) which themselves exist at times in virtue of being part of a causal structure. Recall that this causal structure of states of affairs and events, according to the RR-relationist, is what constitutes time itself. God is therefore temporal in the derivative sense that He participates in various events, which are themselves temporal in virtue of their causal structure (ibid.). The causally-connected events that constitute our time series are the ones that we participate in, and God, by participating in them too, is like us derivatively temporal (DDT).

However, when we consider a continuant in itself, it’s not temporal, because it doesn’t (in contrast with occurrences) consist of a collection of temporal parts. In other words, it ‘does not exhibit an internal causal structure’

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8 It’s helpful to construe this in terms of the endurance versus perdurance debate. Le Poidevin doesn’t specifically mention endurantism or perdurantism, but it’s clear that continuants endure (are wholly present at each moment that they exist), as opposed to occurrences, which perdure (have distinct temporal parts at different moments of their existence).

9 Le Poidevin is evidently assuming that, if they persist, states of affairs are occurrences – they persist through time by perduring, and continuants such as God participate in them. I’ll therefore assume this along with him. Taking, for instance, the state of affairs of ‘the vase being red’, it has a temporal part located at the different moments of time that it obtains. We say that ‘the vase being red’ has causally connected temporal parts: ‘red at t1,’ ‘red at t2,’ ‘red at t3,’ and so on. If states of affairs were to be continuants, then ‘the vase being red’ would be numerically the same state of affairs at each moment that it obtains. Le Poidevin can’t be advocating this latter view, for then he’d be suggesting that continuants (God) can participate in other continuants (states of affairs). Hereafter, I’ll use the terms ‘event’ and ‘state of affairs’ interchangeably, meaning simply the causally connected occurrences that time, according to RR-relationism, can be reduced to.

10 Or at least, we participate in some of the causally-connected events that constitute our time series. Some events in our causal series aren’t participated in by anybody – for instance, a volcanic eruption millions of years ago.
This is Le Poidevin’s commitment to NDA: considered in and of Himself, God is atemporal. Likewise, we ordinary humans (who are also alleged to be continuants) are timeless when considered only in ourselves. Le Poidevin endorses this when he says that, in postulating God as timeless when considered in Himself, it might seem that ‘we have removed the all-important difference between God and ordinary continuants such as ourselves’ (ibid.: 220). The thought that this account of God’s timelessness is one in which we, too, can count as timeless, might seem problematic to readers. I’ll return to it in section 4.

Le Poidevin argues that there’s nevertheless an important difference between our relation to time, and God’s relation to time, which can be found in DDA: an additional sense of God’s atemporality. God can participate in His own (causally isolated) time series, where a time series is again understood as a causal network of events. God therefore participates in an isolated time series simply in virtue of some events in His life being in a causal network that’s not causally connected with the causal network of events that we participate in. Le Poidevin suggests a phase of God’s mental life as a candidate for this causally isolated time series. In this sense too, then, God is atemporal. Le Poidevin stresses that this, too, is a derivative sense of atemporality – presumably because God is timeless in virtue of participating in a causally isolated series of events. He says that ‘in a purely derivative sense, God is not in our time either, insofar as he participates in events which are not in our time’ (ibid.:220). We, on the other hand, don’t stand in a temporal relation to several distinct time series (ibid.) – presumably because no aspect of our lives is causally isolated from the single time series which we all participate in.

Le Poidevin’s account becomes even more relevant to this thesis when we see that he applies his three commitments (combined with RR-relationism) to the incarnation. What’s more, he suggests that these commitments help one to endorse kenoticism. Le Poidevin suggests that, in addition to giving up omnipotence and omniscience upon becoming incarnate, the Son also gives up DDA – His divine prerogative to engage in a distinct causal series of His own. He ‘is then wholly within time in a way in which He was not before’ (ibid.: 222), which contributes to His being fully human. I’ll return to this again.
Returning to the three claims, the prevalent notions of ‘participation’ in events and ‘derivative’ (a)temporality seem to be intimately connected. However, Le Poidevin doesn’t suggest any examples of what this ‘participation’ in the events of our time amounts to, besides the incarnation. The claim made by NVDA is that when we consider continuants in themselves, they’re timeless. Le Poidevin says that ‘an object by itself does not exhibit an internal causal structure: only the states of affairs of which it is part do so’ (ibid.: 216). This suggests that when continuants participate in events, this act of participation doesn’t betray internal causal sequence of any sort within the entity: the causal sequence is only to be found in the events. Le Poidevin notes that this is simply the three-dimensionalist view of persistence: an object has no temporal parts, and so is wholly present at each moment that it exists. In relationist terms, ‘an object exists at different times only in a derivative sense, by being part of states of affairs which, in virtue of exhibiting a causal structure, exist at different times’ (ibid.). Le Poidevin’s understanding of participation thus relies heavily upon the reduction of time to causation. He also relies on his construal of participation to permit his sense of ‘derivative’ temporality: continuants in themselves are timeless, but they participate in different events which are themselves temporal in virtue of the causal connections between the same. Furthermore, Le Poidevin needs his non-causally structured understanding of participation in order to uphold NVDA. If he were to permit continuants to participate in events in the sense that they themselves exhibit a causal structure, then he’d no longer be able to maintain that continuants, in themselves, are timeless.

Let’s tease NVDA out a little more. It might appear initially objectionable on the grounds that something can be temporal in spite of not being composed of temporal parts, and continuants seem like just the right candidates for this. After all, they ‘continue’ – they are ‘selfsame and identical without qualification at the different times at which they exist’ (Simons 2000: 420, my italics). This would be problematic for upholding NVDA, because it requires something to be straightforwardly timeless when considered in itself – not that it exist at many different times.

RR-relationists might respond that this is only problematic for substantivalists, because then a continuant must be said to be ‘contained by’
each of the moments at which it exists. With RR-relationism, however, time is reducible to the causal nexus of events. In other words, for the RR-relationist, there's nothing more to time than the causal connections between these states of affairs, whereas for the substantivalist, God would’ve had to create time in addition to creating its contents. It could therefore be argued that only on RR-relationism can we consider a continuant ‘in and of itself,’ independently of the causally structured events that constitute time. When we do so, we find that continuants don’t exhibit a causal structure. Granted, we could also allow that there are continuants that persist through substantival time by enduring, but in this case their existence in time wouldn’t be derivative. The important difference between the substantivalist and RR-relationist positions is that for the latter alone, time reduces to causation. It’s this that enables the RR-relationist the luxury of claiming that continuants exist at a time derivatively. With substantivalism, however, God can’t exist at a time ‘derivatively’ – He either exists at a moment, or He doesn’t. Le Poidevin suggests that on substantivalism ‘it makes dubious sense’ to consider objects existing independently of spacetime, because then they would lack extension (2017.: 213). He also adds that, on substantivalism, there’s an ‘asymmetric dependence of ordinary objects on spacetime. Spacetime could exist without ordinary objects, but not vice versa’ (ibid.:215). The thought here is that, on substantivalism, we can’t exist without doing so at at least one moment of time, and thus if we’re temporal, we’re temporal in a direct, non-derivative, sense.

It therefore seems more difficult for substantivalists to consider a continuant ‘only in itself,’ because for the substantivalist it’s difficult to consider a continuant independently of time. However, for the RR-relationist we only exist at times indirectly, or derivatively: in virtue of participating in causally connected events. Le Poidevin argues that ‘if temporality is derivative, it is not so integral to an object, but a matter of how the states of affairs in which it participates are ordered’ (ibid.: 219). It therefore appears that the RR-relationist has, at the very least, less of a problem than the substantivalist when it comes to the possibility of contemplating a continuant ‘only in itself.’ I’ll therefore grant that this ‘derivative’ temporal existence (DDT) is something that’s only available to the RR-relationist. It’s the element that makes this latter position distinct from each of the (substantivalism-assuming) accounts of strict
temporality and strict atemporality. Consequentially, it also means that substantivalists can’t (unlike RR-relationists) uphold NDA of a temporal being, because that being would be temporal considered only in itself. This is an interesting result, that wouldn’t have been revealed had we not considered what the picture of God’s relation to relationist time might be like.

Le Poidevin’s position has much to recommend it. It’s original and neat and, if successful, presents a genuine tertium quid in the classic debate between divine temporality and divine atemporality. It certainly does great service to the debate over God’s relation to time, by illuminating the possibility that substantival assumptions may have restricted the foregoing debate. However, I’ll now suggest some potential problems facing it. Having contended that DDT is a genuinely unique position that’s unavailable to the substantivalist, I’ll nevertheless argue that NDA and DDA aren’t coherent positions. This is because any credible understanding of NDA relies heavily on DDA, and DDA is itself subject to internal tension. Moreover, I’ll argue that NDA and DDA are in fact in conflict in worrying ways. I contend that, because of these problems, Le Poidevin’s account can’t be appealed to to explain God’s relation to time. DDT, which illustrates God’s temporality if RR-relationism is true, is the only one of Le Poidevin’s three positions that can be upheld. This provides independent support for my arguments above that we should be divine temporalists. I also suggest that there’s room for DDT to be further developed.

(4) PROBLEMS WITH NON-DERIVATIVE DIVINE ATEMPORALITY (NDA)

My first worry with NDA is that it’s not really a sense of timelessness at all. In fact, it’s a relation which we, too, satisfy, according to Le Poidevin. NDA says that one is timeless simply by being a continuant. For many proponents of classical divine timelessness, at least a part of its attraction is that it gives God a status superior to, and distinguished from, our own: He’s removed from the temporal order, whereas our experience is limited to the here and now. NDA would thus be unattractive to many theists. However, Le Poidevin is also committed to DDA, which He says is a sense of timelessness
that is unique to God. I’ll therefore grant for the time being that \textit{NDA} escapes this ‘thinness’ allegation, because it can be bolstered by \textit{DDA}.

Another worry with \textit{NDA} is that, in conceiving of God as a continuant, one risks positing a God who ceases to exist whenever He’s not participating in any events. Peter Simons thinks we ought to deny that a continuant exists at any time it’s not involved with any occurrent. Asking whether ‘the spectre of continuants popping into and out of existence according as they are involved or not in occurrents’ (2000: 424-5) might be raised, Simons deems this not to be a serious worry for ‘the world as we know it,’ (ibid.: 425) stating that it’s ‘a tremendously active place, where everything or practically everything is changing all the time, if only in some dull and repetitive but continuous oscillatory way (ibid.). Granting that Simons’s relaxed attitude to continuants popping in and out of existence is acceptable for ordinary continuants, it’s nevertheless a pertinent worry in the case of God, our necessarily existing creator.

RR-relationists could respond to the worry that God flits in and out of existence by appealing to Le Poidevin’s other argument for divine atemporality (\textit{DDA}). It could be argued that God is, all the while, participating in His own (causally isolated) time series, due to part of His mental life being causally isolated from the events of our time series. God doesn’t, therefore, go out of existence when not participating in events of our time, to the extent that the processes of His mental life form their own time series.

On Le Poidevin’s kenotic account of the incarnation, however, the Son sacrifices \textit{DDA} in order to become wholly engaged with the events of our time. That is, He gives up the prerogative to participate in a causally isolated time series. During the incarnation, therefore, the Son is only timeless in the sense that He’s a continuant – and continuants are timeless when considered in themselves (\textit{NDA}). In spite of this, I maintain that there’s no danger of God popping in and out of existence whilst He’s incarnate, because during the incarnation He’s of course \textit{continually} participating in the events of our time. Whenever God isn’t participating in an event of our time, therefore, we can hold that He still exists in virtue of His participation in His own isolated time series. Conversely, at the times when He \textit{has} sacrificed the prerogative to participate in this separate time series, we no longer face the worry of God
‘popping in and out of existence’. This is because at these times God is incarnate, and is all the while participating in the events of our time series.

Additionally, Le Poidevin could appeal to a Social Trinitarian conception of God to support the view that God doesn’t ‘pop out of existence’ whilst He’s incarnate. Le Poidevin could argue that the Father and the Holy Spirit, the other members of the Trinity, don’t relinquish DDA. This is because they’re separate persons, capable of entering into different relations, because they’re different types (as opposed to tokens) of the very same substance.\(^{11}\) The Father and Spirit are always participating in a causal series which is isolated from our own. In virtue of this, they’re always participating in events that form a temporal structure, and so God doesn’t oscillate in and out of existence.

It appears, therefore, that DDA – the claim that God is derivatively timeless in virtue of part of His mental life being causally isolated from the events of our lives – has saved the day for NDA in the face of the worries above. It can be employed to argue that God doesn’t flicker in and out of existence depending on whether or not He’s participating in the events of our lives, because He’s all the while participating in a causal series of His own. When God has sacrificed this ability to participate in a causally isolated series, the initial worry of God popping in and of existence no longer applies. This is because God is now incarnate, and is continually participating in the events of our lives, with no mysterious breaks. Additionally, this could also be because the Father and Holy Spirit still possess DDA. It was also argued that DDA can save the day in response to the worry that NDA is far too thin of an account of divine timelessness. However, DDA can only be brought to the rescue in these instances if it can stand up to independent scrutiny. I’ll now make the case that DDA is subject to internal metaphysical tension.

\(^{11}\) I relied on a Social Trinitarian account in Chapter 4 when I was arguing in favour of kenoticism, so it’s only fair to offer it up here as an option for Le Poidevin.
of an isolated ‘time series’ is suspect. It seems to introduce sequence into the life of the allegedly timeless being – regardless both of whether this sequence is connected with ours, and of whether the sequence exists independently of the events that constitute it. This ‘isolated’ part of God’s mental life is alleged to form a causal series, but a temporal sequence is nothing over and above this, on RR-relationism. Perhaps Le Poidevin would be happy with this – indeed, he acknowledges that his account posits ‘timelessness of a much less radical kind than is represented by one tradition in Christian thought’ (2017: 221).

More worryingly, though, if this is what it means to be atemporal, then there’s no reason why substantivalists can’t also help themselves to this account, and say that God is timeless due to existing in a time series that’s isolated from ours. Put differently, there’s nothing about this ‘isolated time series’ atemporality that means it is available exclusively to the RR-relationist. This makes the RR-relationist position appear less unique after all. Admittedly, substantivalists might face greater worries regarding God’s dependence on the isolated time series. The RR-relationist could maintain that the isolated time series supervenes on God’s mental life, so it’s God that is more fundamental than time, and time in no way constrains God. For substantivalists, however, time is something that can exist independently of its contents. It could therefore be argued that to the extent that substantivalists posit God existing in a time series of His own, they owe us an account of how it’s also possible that God exist independently of time. Otherwise, substantivalists will have produced a version of DDA whereby time is something more fundamental than God – an unattractive picture for the theist.

However, the RR-relationist isn’t herself immediately home and dry with respect to God’s independence from time. Le Poidevin says that ‘if God necessarily has a mental life, and if that mental life has a causal structure, then (given the causal theory of time order) it seems that, after all, God has no choice over whether or not time exists’ (ibid.: 220). The thought here is that God’s creation of time ought to be wholly free and voluntary, and the existence of a time series ought to be contingent. However, because time is nothing over and above causal relations, all God need have is a causally-structured mental life and He’s inadvertently created time. Le Poidevin responds to this by maintaining that God is still the source of this time series, so
the existence of this time series isn’t independent of Him (ibid.). It thus appears that the RR-relationist can tell the better story regarding God’s independence from time.

Another worry for the RR-relationist has to do with the implications of part of God’s mental life being causally disconnected from the events of our time. This detachment suggests that God isn’t fully engaged with creation. To the extent that this is true, it’s at odds with the traditional picture of an omnibenevolent God who is wholly concerned about His creatures, and wholly focused on and knowledgeable about their actions.

A potential way to dispel this objection could be to consider DDA further, and question exactly what the contents of God’s isolated mental life are.12 Could He, perhaps, be contemplating the vast extent of His knowledge? It’s hard to imagine how He can do this without being engaged with the events of our lives, and the information that He knows about these events. Perhaps He’s reflecting on how much love He has to give? Again, this seems to require God to think about the creatures that He loves. Furthermore, a likely explanation for how God possesses this knowledge of us and our activities is via a causal connection between us and Him.13 These gestures at the contents of God’s thoughts, though crude, suggest the difficulty of imagining what God can think about that would be truly causally isolated from the events of our lives. Though good news for those worried that God is disengaged from creation in light of DDA, this is at the expense of chipping away at the core of DDA, which states that a part of God’s mental life is genuinely causally isolated.

It could be responded that God knows and loves us in a non-causal sense – so the above thoughts could indeed be aspects of His causally isolated mental life. Of course, the burden of proof is now on the RR-relationist to tell

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12 It could be argued that assigning God a mental life comprised of distinct stages is problematic in the first place, because it’s at odds with the doctrine of divine simplicity. However, I won’t treat this as a serious problem with Le Poidevin’s account, given that in the next chapter I’ll argue that all temporalist accounts must ride somewhat roughshod over this doctrine.

13 This is further supported by the causal theory of reference, whereby ‘speakers succeed in referring to something by means of its name because underlying their uses of the name are links in a causal chain stretching back to the dubbing of the particular name’ (Reimer & Michaelson 2016). The idea here would be that God can’t contemplate me, Emily, without there being an appropriately linked causal chain tracing back to when I was named. Arguments in favour of the causal theory of reference, assuming that it can also apply to God, therefore support my suggestion that when God thinks of us it has to be in such a way that renders Him causally connected to us.
us more about the events of God’s mental life, and how part of it can be causally isolated from the events of our lives. The divine mental life must be sufficiently engaged with creation for God to not come across as neglectful and uncaring, but there can be no causal connections between it and our time series.

This task of explaining how there can be no causal connection between part of God’s mental life and our time series becomes more difficult once we consider the possibility that God is at no point causally disconnected from the events of our time series, because He created our time series in virtue of creating the initial state of affairs of the universe. He’ll therefore always be the ‘first mover,’ the initial cause to which all events and states of affairs can be retraced.14 This, after all, is a major reason why people praise God, giving thanks for His being the creator of all things. This pervasive causal connection between God and creation is problematic for DDA, according to which part of God is ‘isolated from our causal network’.

Perhaps Le Poidevin’s response would be to reiterate that he’s only postulated a part, or phase, of God’s mental life being causally isolated from creation. This is, after all, what DDA states. It’s only God’s other part(s), the response would go, that are causally engaged: creating and sustaining the universe, and participating in our time series. This doesn’t seem an acceptable response to guarantee atemporality here, however. Firstly, I’m sceptical of causally cordoning off ‘part’ of God’s life. For one thing, Le Poidevin doesn’t provide a suggestion of how we’re to understand the way that God’s mental life is composed of at least one part. Even granting that we can make sense of a distinguished ‘part,’ or ‘phase’ (ibid.) of God’s life, this allegedly isolated part must surely be mentally accessible by the part of God that participates in our time series. Otherwise, we risk fracturing God’s unity.

14 The problem facing DDA here would be even greater if we were ‘continuous creationists’. Continuous creationists hold that God doesn’t merely cause the universe to exist through His initial act of creation: He also (causally) re-creates it anew at each moment of time. This therefore gives us an even stronger reason to suppose that God is at no point causally disconnected from the events of our time series. For a continuous creationist account, see Quinn (1983). For an examination of this view (and others in the vicinity), see Vander Laan (2006). It’s thanks to Adams (2016) that I encountered continuous creationism, as well as her really helpful criticism of it, and her proposed alternative account.
In fact, insofar as the RR-relationist account appeals to the separation of these ‘parts’ of God, it risks paralleling the contentious ‘two minds’ and ‘divided mind’ accounts of the incarnation due to Morris and Swinburne.\textsuperscript{15} I discussed, and dismissed, these accounts in Chapters 4 and 6, under the heads of the incoherence problem and the Son’s glorification. By ascribing different properties (such as being causally connected to our time series, and \textit{not} causally connected to our time series) to different ‘parts’ of God’s mental life, it becomes difficult for us to know which (if any) properties transfer to God as a whole. I venture that Le Poidevin would consider this similarity between his and the two minds account to be unwelcome, because he’s argued against these accounts elsewhere.\textsuperscript{16}

I’ll now return to the worry that God is, in virtue of creating the universe, causally connected to creation in such a way that \textit{DDA} cannot be upheld. It might be responded that God creates the universe in a way that’s different altogether from the way in which ordinary causes bring about their effects. By way of illustration, Le Poidevin suggests the analogy of an author creating a novel. George Orwell determined the events of \textit{Nineteen Eighty Four}, and the causal relations between these. However, ‘his so determining those events is not part of the novel, and do not stand in the same relation to those events as, say, the sinister forces of the Ministry of Truth’ (2017:219). By analogy, God’s act of creation would be different from the typical causal relations that take place within the world, and so wouldn’t thereby count as an event in time, given that time is simply the network of causal connections between events. This analogy isn’t one that Le Poidevin himself endorses. In fact, earlier on in this very same paper he says that ‘to say that God is the \textit{creator} of \(x\) is naturally understood as implying \(x\)’s causal dependence on God’ (ibid.: 211). He later adds that ‘the fact that the causal relations in the novel are not real, but purely fictional, may strain the analogy to breaking point’ (ibid.: 219-20).

\textsuperscript{15} Even if Le Poidevin’s account doesn’t collapse into a two minds account, it at least seems susceptible to many of the problems that face the two minds account – at least, when the latter is construed along compositionalist lines.

\textsuperscript{16} See his (2009b), where he questions whether the divided mind account of the incarnation provides us with a satisfactory account of Christ’s unity. Furthermore, in his (2011), he disputes the claim that on the two minds account the property ‘constitutive of goodness’ is something that we ascribe only to the divine mind. Rather, he argues that this is a property that ought to be ascribed to a \textit{person as a whole} (2011: 215).
Nevertheless, it does seem that this analogy to an author creating a novel could be employed to respond to the allegation that God is at no point causally disconnected from our time series. In fact, I think that this appeal to ‘non causal’ creation needs to be employed, to avoid the conflict between DDT and DDA. Of course, in taking up this line of argument, one would need to spell out exactly what the relation is between God and His creation, if not an ordinary causal one. This is a species of my criticism above, where I charged the RR-relationist with needing to say more about what the relation is between God’s ‘isolated’ mental life and our time series, if this relation is indeed non-causal. In doing so, a sense of God as a genuine creator and sustainer needs to be maintained, in line with the traditional theistic picture.

I’ve outlined the problems facing both DDA and NDA, demonstrating how NDA relies for its credibility on DDA, and then drawing out the problems that DDA faces. I now argue that there are also ways in which Le Poidevin’s two commitments to God’s atemporality are in conflict with each other.

(6) NDA AND DDA IN CONFLICT

If God is indeed atemporal when considered in Himself (NDA), this is in conflict with the RR-relationist’s other aspect of atemporality – the suggestion that part of God’s mental life forms a causally isolated time series (DDA). NDA and DDA are two jointly-held facets of atemporality in Le Poidevin’s argument. However, it seems contradictory to suggest of the same being both that it’s timeless when considered only in itself, and that it participates in its own time series which is causally isolated from all else. I presume that considering a being ‘only in itself’ is to take into account only its internal relations, and to discount all external connections, or relations to other things. For this being to then be deemed timeless in itself would be (according to RR-relationists) for there to be no causal connections between any of its internal ‘parts,’ if it does indeed possess parts. Of course, Le Poidevin himself endorses the notion of a ‘part’ of God, by suggesting that ‘part’ of His life is causally isolated from all else (see section 5). Equally, however, for a being to participate in a causally isolated time series is (for RR-relationists) presumably
to suppose that the being’s life has internal parts that are causally – and so, temporally connected.

Put differently, when Le Poidevin says in line with NDA that ‘considered only in itself, a continuant is not temporal’ (ibid.: 219), given the reduction of time to causation, he must mean: ‘considered only in itself, a continuant possesses no internal causal sequence.’ However, according to Le Poidevin, God is both timeless when considered in Himself, and (in line with DDA) He has a mental life that (independently of any causal relation to anything else) forms a causal (and so, temporal) sequence. These two commitments appear straightforwardly contradictory.

This consequence is particularly remarkable when we remind ourselves of how utterly meagre NDA is, compared to classical definitions of divine timelessness. As I noted in section 4, one simply needs to be a continuant to satisfy NDA! It’s a sense of timelessness which we, too, satisfy – and I mentioned that Le Poidevin is happy to acknowledge this. I explained that Le Poidevin certainly needs DDA, His other commitment to divine timelessness, in order to provide us with a sense in which God alone is atemporal. However, as sparse as NDA is, it still conflicts with DDA due to the RR-relationist reduction of time to causation.

In response, the RR-relationist might maintain that NDA and DDA are by no means peculiar to the case of God. In fact, all continuants are timeless when considered in themselves, and yet also participate in events that form a causal (and so, temporal) series. When explaining that God is timeless when considered only in Himself, Le Poidevin says: ‘we have removed the all-important difference between God and ordinary continuants such as ourselves’ (ibid.: 220), suggesting that he also attributes ‘atemporality when considered in ourselves’ to us. Yet we, too, participate in events that form a causal structure. One could maintain that these two aspects of atemporality are no more in conflict than are the claims that ordinary continuants are timeless in themselves and have lives that form a causal (and so, temporal) structure. Why, then, ought matters to be worse for God simply because He participates in an additional time series? Mere participation in one time series, the argument would go, is sufficient to generate a tension with a being’s timelessness when considered
only in itself. In other words, there would be a potential conflict not only between NDA and DDA, but also between NDA and DDT.

However, I would respond that there is a conflict between NDA and DDA, but not between NDA and DDT. Let’s take these alleged conflicts in reverse order. Typically, continuants (such as persons) aren’t thought of as ‘timeless when considered in themselves.’ Rather, they persist through time in a particular way: they endure. Although they don’t have temporal parts, they are, on this account, wholly present at each moment of time at which they exist. The thought that continuants are ‘timeless when considered only in themselves’ is unique to Le Poidevin’s account, and it doesn’t at first glance marry well with the idea that continuants also endure through time. However, we’ve now come full circle back to the debate in section 3. There, I granted the RR-relationist that we can make sense of a continuant being atemporal when considered only in itself. This is because only on RR-relationism can we consider an object independently of time, since time is reducible to causation. In fact, to make proper sense of NDA, we seem to rely on DDT. That is, we can only uphold the idea that a continuant is timeless when considered in itself once we allow that time is reducible to causal connections between events, and that continuants are only ever temporal derivatively.¹⁷

Now, with NDA and DDA, the situation is altogether different, and I maintain that these two commitments are in conflict with each other. This is because DDA requires God’s life (or at least part of it), to be something that’s causally isolated from all else – and to be causally structured. Le Poidevin doesn’t think this claim can be made of ordinary humans. Moreover, this causal structure is all that there is to time, on RR-relationism. Part of God’s (causally isolated) mental life therefore forms a time series, and it’s very difficult to uphold this in conjunction with the claim that God is timeless when considered only in Himself. I therefore contend that NDA and DDA are in conflict in a

¹⁷ Is there, then, a sense in which NDA is derivative after all, because God is only timeless in Himself in virtue of being a (derivatively temporal) continuant, and hence not Himself exhibiting a causal structure? I’d suggest that on the most charitable reading of Le Poidevin’s argument the direction of explanation runs the other way: God doesn’t, when considered in Himself, exhibit a causal structure. As a result, if God is temporal, He’s only derivatively so, in virtue of participating in causally-connected events. Importantly, this wouldn’t make DDT dependent on NDA: it’s just that if God happens to be temporal, He’s only derivatively so, because He’s a continuant participating in our causal series.
way that \textit{NDA} and \textit{DDT} aren’t, and that simultaneously upholding these former commitments to God’s atemporality looks unfeasible.

One might respond that, because we’re attributing temporality and timelessness to different things, \textit{NDA} and \textit{DDA} aren’t in conflict: the \textit{being} that is God is timeless in Himself, whereas His \textit{life} is causally (and so, temporally) structured. However, I think that there’s something suspect about drawing such a sharp distinction between God, on the one hand, and God’s life, on the other. Put differently, if time is reducible to causation, and a being’s life is composed of causally-connected events, there’s still a problem with saying that the \textit{being} is, when considered only in itself, timeless. This is particularly pertinent because the sequenced events we’re considering here are the events of God’s mental life. They are, according to Le Poidevin, mental events which are causally disconnected from any events in any other causal series, and yet they form a causal series of their own. If considering a being ‘only in itself’ means disregarding the events of its mental life which are causally isolated from all else, I think we’re stripping down too much of our sense of that being and its essence. However, Le Poidevin must disregard God’s causally-sequenced mental life when considering God ‘only in Himself’, otherwise he can’t allow for \textit{NDA}. This is because for Le Poidevin there’s nothing more to a temporal sequence than a causal sequence, and thus if a phase of God’s mental life is causally-sequenced it’s at odds with God being timeless ‘only in Himself’.

\subsection*{(7) A RELATIONIST KENOTICISM}

I’ve argued that Le Poidevin’s two ‘atemporal’ features of God can’t, in fact, be upheld if RR-relationism is true. We’ve seen that Le Poidevin extends his argument to the incarnation, arguing that when the Son becomes kenotically incarnate, He sacrifices \textit{DDA} in addition to sacrificing other divine prerogatives such as omniscience and omnipotence. In light of my argument that \textit{DDA} is subject to many problems (both internally and in light of its incompatibility with \textit{NDA}), I therefore submit that \textit{DDA} can’t be sacrificed by the Son when He becomes incarnate, because it can’t be possessed by Him at all. The Son (if temporal, as the first three parts of this thesis concluded) can nevertheless continue to possess \textit{DDT} when He becomes incarnate, and can
also still become *kenotically* incarnate in the traditional way outlined and endorsed in Chapters 4 and 6. In fact, the result of this chapter lends independent support to divine temporalism, because a temporal God can exist ‘inside’ of substantivalist or RR-relationist time. In comparison, it looks as though our construal of divine atemporality is problematic if RR-relationism is true.

(8) CONCLUSION

I’ve argued that substantivalism has been all too readily assumed in the history of the debate over God’s relation to time. I considered again the ontological status of time: examining a relationist stance instead. I examined Le Poidevin’s RR-relationist account of God’s relation to time, but argued that only one of its three main commitments is coherent. I argued that *DDA*, one of Le Poidevin’s commitments to atemporality, is riddled with problems, which is particularly problematic given the extent to which *NDA* (his other commitment to atemporality) depends on it. I then argued that these two commitments are in conflict with each other. I conceded, however, that there’s no incompatibility between *DDT* and *NDA*.

We therefore have only *DDT* remaining: the commitment to God being derivatively temporal in virtue of His participation in the events and states of affairs of our lives. Divine temporalists can also be RR-relationists, and make sense of a kenotic incarnation, albeit not in the unique way that Le Poidevin has in mind. Overall, then, when we consider God and RR-relationist time, it’s only a sense of divine *temporality* that can be salvaged. That a temporal God alone is consistent (thanks to *DDT*) with RR-relationism lends independent support to my argument in Parts 1-3 that upholding an orthodox metaphysics of the incarnation can lead us only to a temporal God. I’ll now turn to an alternative debate in the metaphysics of time: the debate between tensed and tenseless theories of time. I’ll argue that this debate also recommends indirectly in favour of a temporal God, because (unlike atemporalism) temporalism is consistent with *both* tensed and tenseless time. This latter combination of a temporal God and tenseless time is hitherto unexplored.
Chapter 8
Tensed vs. Tenseless Time

Theologians and philosophers of religion can advance the nature of divine eternity only by tackling the difficult and multifaceted problem of the tensed versus tenseless theory of time (Craig 1998: 248).

The debate between the tensed and tenseless theories (or, in McTaggart’s terms, the A-series and the B-series (1908: 458)) of time is hotly contested, spanning philosophical, scientific, and – more recently – psychological debate. It’s the debate over whether or not time in reality flows: whether there’s an ontologically-privileged present that’s continually changing, or whether all moments of time are equally real. Tenseless theorists maintain the latter position; tensed theorists the former. A thesis which aims to examine the metaphysics of God’s relation to time mustn’t neglect mention of this debate about the nature of time itself, which is arguably the central debate in the philosophy of time. Whether God (if God exists) is temporal or timeless is bound up in interesting ways with these theories of time, but ways which haven’t been sufficiently recognised and elucidated in the foregoing debate. This chapter illuminates these assumptions that couple God’s relation to time with the metaphysics of time, as well as revealing new directions for this debate.

In section 1, I introduce the tensed and tenseless theories of time in more detail, and explain how they’ve been traditionally taken (indeed, more often than not, assumed) to fit better with a temporal and timeless God, respectively. These traditional pairings haven’t been made without exception, however: in section 2, I discuss how Leftow has challenged them by arguing for the compatibility of a timeless God and tensed time. More specifically, he argues that God can be timeless even though presentism is true (2009: 297-319). I criticise this picture on grounds of incoherence. In order to give the combination of a timeless God and tensed time a fair shot, I next consider the
potential coherence of combining a timeless God with the other main
dynamical views of time: the Growing Block Theory and the Moving Spotlight
Theory, in turn.\textsuperscript{1} I argue that with both, we face similar problems to the ones
we faced with presentism. I therefore conclude that a God existing ‘outside’ of
tensed time is an incoherent view, whichever dynamical conception of time
we’re working with. Atemporalists therefore have only tenseless time to work
with. In section 3, I examine the alternative way of ‘shaking up’ the traditional
pairings: I consider the compatibility of a \textit{temporal} God and \textit{tenseless} time, which
is hitherto completely unexplored. I argue that this \textit{is} a coherent construal of
God’s relation to time, and one that enjoys several benefits besides. I sketch
the preliminaries of the account in section 3.1. In section 3.2, I speculate about
how a temporal God might become (kenotically) incarnate in tenseless time,
since I’ve argued that this is the only successful model of divine eternity in light
of incarnational considerations. Finally, in section 3.3 I consider, and respond
to, the main objections that could be lodged against the account of a temporal
God existing within tenseless time. I conclude in section 4 that the picture of a
temporal God existing within tenseless time ought to remain firmly on the
table in future discussions over God’s relation to time. Temporalists, unlike
atemporalists, therefore have the luxury of pairing their account with either
tensed or tenseless time.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{(1) OLD ASSUMPTIONS: TENSED VS. TENSELESS TIME}
\end{itemize}

According to the tensed, or ‘A-theory’ of time, the present moment is
\textit{privileged} above all other moments of time: marking out the moment that is,
objectively, ‘now.’ At any time, therefore, we couldn’t provide a complete
description of reality without specifying this privileged moment (Cameron
2015: 2). Furthermore, time in reality \textit{flows}, such that the moment that is the
‘present’ moment changes.\textsuperscript{2}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Henceforth, I’ll use the terms ‘dynamical’ and ‘tensed’ interchangeably.
\item \textsuperscript{2} Interestingly, general intuitions seem to be divided regarding whether we feel that time
flows \textit{towards us}, from the future into the present, as though its events are somehow borne
towards us on a stream, or whether we feel that we, the contents of time, move forwards
through it, from the present into the future. We’d be like ‘sailors on the ocean of time’
(Skow 2015: 178) on this latter account. See Skow (2015: 178-187) for an interesting
\end{itemize}
There are different versions of tensed theories of time, and it’s from now on that they part ways. Presentists add to the above that the present moment is the only moment of time that exists: no other moments are a part of reality, so the present moment is ontologically privileged. This moment will soon pass out of existence, as a new present moment comes to exist. Growing Block theorists additionally admit the existence of the past into their ontology, so that the present and past are all that there is to reality. Reality can therefore be imagined as a ‘block’ that expands with the flow of time, so that at each instant a new aspect is added to reality. The present moment is still privileged, because it is always the ‘leading edge’ of the block – the edge which the block grows from. With each moment of time, a present moment becomes past, and a new present moment comes into existence at the leading edge of the block – meaning that the block grows. At any given moment in time, after the leading edge of the block there’s simply non-existence. We refer to this ‘non-existence’ as the ‘future,’ but it picks out nothing in reality, because the future doesn’t exist. A final tensed view of time, admitting still more into its ontology, is the Moving Spotlight Theory (MST). According to MST, all moments of time (past, present and future) exist, and are equally real. However, the instant of time that’s the present instant changes absolutely. The theory gets its name from C.D. Broad, who describes a row of houses with a police officer’s torch illuminating each house in turn. Broad says that this is how we might imagine presentness: like a light that successively illuminates each instant of time in turn (Broad 1923: 59). Importantly, on this analogy the houses are all equally real, and exist even when they’re not being illuminated – just as on MST all moments of time are equally real, and exist even when they’re not present.

Tensed views of time have traditionally been taken to sit better with an understanding of God as temporal. This seems to stem primarily from a desire

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3 Presentism is probably the most popular of the tensed views of time. For a defence, see (e.g.) Bigelow (1996) and Bourne (2006).
4 For defences of the Growing Block theory, see Broad (1923) and Tooley (1997).
5 It seems safe to say that MST is the least popular of the three models of tensed time. Skow (2015) has recently defended it over its tensed rivals, only to opt for a tenseless theory of time as the ultimate victor. See Cameron (2015) for the only substantial defence of MST that I know of.
to preserve divine omniscience. The central idea here is that, because on tensed views of time there’s an objective fact of the matter about which moment is ‘now,’ and this fact changes, God’s knowledge must also change in order to encompass this continual modification of reality. However, this ‘moment to moment’ change in knowledge is something that isn’t possible for a timeless, immutable God. Nicholas Wolterstorff comments specifically on a timeless God’s lack of knowledge of time’s flow when he says: ‘Surely the non-occurrence followed by the occurrence followed by the non-occurrence of [sequential] knowings constitutes a change on God’s time-strand’ (1982: 116). Delmas Lewis frames the problem from a slightly different angle: a timeless God’s lack of knowledge of the moment that’s objectively ‘now’:

There is an important ontological feature- [existing in the present] - which we know I possess and which my birth and death don’t and, moreover, which talk of locations on a linear continuum neither reflects nor captures. An eternal entity ex hypothesi is unaware of this feature (1984: 79).

For instance, assuming a tensed theory of time, a timeless God wouldn’t be able to know that I’m ‘now’ typing about His lack of knowledge. Arthur Prior similarly suggests that an atemporal God is unable to know (at the time) that the final exams in 1960 in Manchester are over ‘now’: he says this information can’t be known by a timeless God or any timeless being, ‘because it just isn’t true timelessly’ (2003: 42). This is because for a timeless God there is no privileged ‘now’, just a sequence of ordered events, each as real as any other.

Having said this, there’s an important and interesting caveat to note. These arguments that marry tensed time with a temporal God seem only to work when we start with tensed time. Put differently, we begin with the assumption that there’s a privileged present in reality, that changes with the objective passage of time. We then reason that if there’s a God, He ought to be temporal in order to preserve His omniscience. That is, those arguing for

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7 For example, Swinburne (1994) and Wolterstorff (2001a) take such approaches. Swinburne begins with arguing for tensed time (ibid.: 72-95), and then argues that an atemporalist construal of God is incoherent (ibid.: 95). Similarly, Wolterstorff explains why he’s a tensed theorist of time (2001a: 195-6), and then argues that, among other
God’s temporality seem to be assuming the tensed theory of time in putting forward their case for the former. Importantly, this inference is at odds with my overall approach in this thesis, which has been to begin with indispensable commitments about God (namely, that He became incarnate), and use them to reflect upon His relation to time – and, in this final Part of this thesis, on the nature of time itself. This explanatory priority will also be important to bear in mind in section 3, where I’ll argue that the reverse commitment doesn’t necessarily hold. That is, I’ll claim that if we start out with the notion of a temporal God, and then consider the nature of time, we’re not forced to adhere to a tensed theory of time.\(^8\) I’ll now elucidate the tenseless view of time in more detail, together with the reasons why it’s typically been argued for alongside an atemporal God.

Opposed to tensed views of time is the tenseless, or ‘B-theory’ account.\(^9\) Tenseless theorists maintain, contra presentists and growing block theorists, that all moments of time have the same ontological status: existence. That is, there are no ontologically-privileged moments of time. Contra all tensed theories of time, tenseless theorists also argue that there’s no privileged property of ‘presentness’.\(^10\) They deny that time changes, or flows, maintaining that our experience as of being in the present is merely an illusion. Instead, times are ordered in ‘earlier than,’ ‘later than,’ and ‘simultaneous with’ relations. Tenseless theories are often referred to as ‘four-dimensionalist,’ because time is simply like another spatial dimension. All moments of time exist in reality, and, just as my home town is no less real because I’m currently (spatially) far away from it, so too the times of my childhood are no less real because they’re (temporally) far away from my temporal location as I type this (Sider 2001: 11).

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\(^8\) This runs contrary to the view of Paul Helm (2014), who argues that divine temporalism as a whole is committed to time being dynamic.

\(^9\) The tenseless theory of time is sometimes referred to as ‘eternalism’, because all moments of time are eternally a part of reality. However, I mentioned at the start of this thesis that there are different ways in which we can understand what it means to be ‘eternal’. Something can be timelessly eternal, and it can also be temporally eternal. Moreover, what it means to call God eternal is exactly what’s up for debate in this thesis. To avoid confusion, I’ll therefore steer clear of referring to the tenseless theory of time as ‘eternalism’.

\(^10\) This ‘property’ of presentness is mysterious for Moving Spotlight theorists, which is one of the reasons for MST’s particular lack of popularity when compared with its tensed rivals. Presentists can argue that the present is ontologically privileged, whilst Growing Blockers can argue that the present is privileged as the block’s leading edge.
It’s a timeless God that’s traditionally been thought to pair the best with a tenseless theory of time, and the motivation for this seems again to primarily be the preservation of God’s omniscience. A timeless God’s perspective is of all moments of time as equally real, so (the thought goes) this is how time should really be. Our perspective might be of time as appearing to flow, but this is an illusion. God, from outside of time, sees reality as it really is: an ordering of equally real events into ‘earlier than’, ‘later than’, and ‘simultaneous with’ relations.

The arguments in this vicinity seem to begin with the thought that God is timeless, and then infer that time must be tenseless, in order to preserve God’s omniscience. This isn’t to say that the direction of explanation couldn’t go the opposite way, however: one can imagine being a tenseless theorist who considers that God, if He exists, ought to be timeless, in order to know reality.

Having now outlined the main features of the tensed and tenseless theories, and explained how each has been taken to fit more naturally with a particular construal of God’s relation to time, I’ll proceed to introduce and analyse some ways in which these traditional pairings have been, and could be, shaken up. I begin with Leftow, who denies that a timeless God must lead us to affirm that time is tenseless. Rather, he argues that an atemporal God can coherently be believed in in conjunction with a tensed theory of time – more specifically, presentism.

(2) TIMELESS GOD AND TENSED TIME?

As we well know from the foregoing discussion, Leftow is a strict and unwavering atemporalist. Interestingly, however, he also makes it clear that he doesn’t feel this commits him to a particular theory of time. In Time and Eternity (1991), he argues that, in spite of his steadfast commitment to divine timelessness, he wants to be neutral regarding whether time itself is tensed or tenseless (1991: 231). Remaining true to his word, Leftow has recently (2009) provided us with an argument that a timeless God can exist outside of presentism.

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11 See Helm (1988: 44-7), Craig (1998:221-50), Rogers (2000: 59), and DeWeese (2004: 179-184) for examples of such accounts. Rogers also says that Anselm reasoned along these lines: ‘Anselm takes it that the tenseless view of time follows from the divine perfection of [timeless] eternity, and so we know that time is tenseless’ (2007: 5).
time. He’s responding to Katherin Rogers (2007), who maintains that, for
Anselm, the tenseless view of time follows from his commitment to God’s
timeless eternity (ibid.: 5). Leftow seeks to rebut this claim: he wants to
convince us that Anselm is actually a presentist about time, and that if God is
timeless, it doesn’t have to follow that time is tenseless.

(2.1) TIMELESS GOD AND PRESENTISM?

Leftow argues that a timeless God views all instants of presentist time
by seeing each instant as it is at that stage – when no other moments of time
exist. He says:

Presentist time might appear to God in snaps of an ordered array of
instant-thick blocks. At time’s beginning, let’s say, He sees just an
instant of time. For every instant thereafter, He sees a distinct, later
instant-thick block. Time as a whole appears to Him in many such
experiences, so ordered as to represent the order of instants...God
sees presentist time t, and sees no other time existing as of t. He sees
t+1 in the same way. He sees each as it is when it is special, and as
special then (2009: 309).

Leftow stresses that this is crucially different from how a timeless God would
view tenseless time. If time were tenseless, then all ‘snaps’ would look the same
to God – because at each moment, all of time exists in the same way. Above,
Leftow is claiming that each snap will only ever feature a single instant of time:
the instant that’s present at that time. Every snap will therefore be of a
different moment, to encompass time’s flow, but only of one moment, to
encompass the commitment that only the present exists. I’m of the opinion
that Leftow’s position is an excellent example of somebody attempting to have
their cake and eat it. He’s suggesting that God can be timeless and unchanging,
and that He can receive a sequence of snapshots of a dynamical universe. The
snapshots of presentist time must be received in such a sequence, of course, to
reflect how time is in reality. At any one moment, only one moment exists, and
all else has either ceased to exist, or is yet to come. I fail to see how a timeless
God, whose life has no sequence, can be kept up-to-date with this objective passage.

Leftow anticipates such worries. He elucidates his position by drawing an analogy to our looking at the night sky, where (in one and the same moment) we see stars as they were at different times. He says ‘it would not be absurd to say that we see into many times at once’ (ibid.: 310). He adds that the stars (which existed at different times), all contribute to our experience, but from this it follows neither that they exist all at once, nor that presentism must be false – and yet, we nevertheless observe them all at once. Likewise, this leads Leftow to argue that ‘if it is compatible with presentism that many times be seen at once, it is compatible with presentism that all be seen at once’ (ibid.: 310-11). Leftow is aware that the analogy isn’t exact: he says that (contra our perceiving stars), times don’t affect God’s cognitive state by sending signals to Him across space. Rather, if time is presentist and God’s life is timeless (and so temporally partless), Leftow says that God is able to ‘record’ all of the instants of presentist time in one and the same simple and unchanging bit of His life. He says:

I type one keystroke; this is recorded in one bit of the divine life. I type the next – and it is recorded in the same simple bit. It is not recorded later in the divine life; the divine life does not have earlier and later parts (ibid.: 311).

Leftow argues that it’s now true that, timelessly, the later parts of presentist time are recorded in the divine life. He says that this has to be the case, or else God’s life would have earlier and later parts, meaning that He wouldn’t be immutable (ibid.).

I fail to see how Leftow’s account can be rendered coherent. He’s arguing that all of presentist time is timelessly recorded in God’s atemporal life. An upshot of this is that, as far as we temporal beings are concerned, the future doesn’t exist, but nevertheless future events are ‘already’ (from our standpoint), known about by God. This is because God timelessly knows about every moment of time. However, if we’re to take this option, it seems that we don’t have presentism after all. Rather, it appears that time only seems to us
to flow objectively, but in reality it’s tenseless, and all moments of it are equally real. This is because God’s perspective (given His omniscience) ought to be of ultimate reality: if He sees all of time ‘at once,’ then this is how time actually is. If presentism is true and God is omniscient, therefore, then He ought, at any moment, to perceive only that moment as present, and see nothing else as being part of reality. Presentism is a theory about what reality is really, objectively like: only the present exists, simpliciter. If presentism is true and we want to preserve God’s omniscience, therefore, we simply can’t countenance that all of time is timelessly ‘recorded’ with Him.

Leftow’s argument perhaps stems from his background view (which he claims to base upon Anselm) that there are two equally real modes of existence: temporal and atemporal (he calls the latter ‘eternal’). In *Time and Eternity*, Leftow argues that events can be both present and actual in timeless eternity, and also sequenced in time (1991: 234-5). He says that the conditional ‘if an event occurs in eternity, then it occurs simpliciter’ is false. Rather, according to Leftow:

> It can be true at a time t that an event dated at t+1 has not yet occurred in time, and yet also correct at t to say that that very event exists in eternity. That all events occur at once in eternity, I submit, does not entail that they all occur at once in time (ibid.: 231-2).

Leftow’s contention is that we ought to take God’s timeless mode of existence as an additional mode of existence that’s distinct from our temporal one. He’d therefore maintain that all temporal events also exist in eternity, because ‘events are present and actual all at once in eternity, but present and actual in sequence in other reference frames’ (ibid.: 235). According to this view, there’s more to reality than the way things appear to God from the eternal perspective. There’s also a temporal perspective, and these two perspectives reflect two genuinely different modes of existence: atemporal and temporal.

Rogers is wary of Leftow’s claim that everything really exists in these two different ways. She says that it leads to contradictory claims about, for

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12 This account also alludes to, and engages considerably with that of Stump & Kretzmann (1981), whose influential account postulates temporal and eternal reference frames.
example, my future actions. For instance, from my temporal perspective, I haven’t yet bought a puppy in 2019 (and I don’t know whether I will), but in eternity, I (tenselessly) buy a puppy in 2019. Given the reality of both modes of existence, it becomes true to say that I exist in the present and haven’t yet decided to buy a puppy, and true to say that I exist in eternity where I (tenselessly) buy the puppy in 2019 (2009: 326).

I agree with Rogers, and would add that the picture Leftow paints is flatly incoherent. On Leftow’s account, from the timeless mode of existence all events are equally real, whereas from the temporal mode of existence, only the present moment exists. This isn’t presentism, however – as I’ve explained, presentism is a theory about what reality as a whole is like: it says that all that exists simpliciter is the present. I therefore conclude that Leftow doesn’t succeed in arguing for the coherence of God existing outside of presentist time. At best, what he’s defended here is the compatibility of a timeless God and a sort of pseudo-presentism, where the present is all that exists from one perspective. At worst, he’s simply defended a tenseless view of time, because of God’s perspective (which is of ultimate reality) perceiving all events as equally real. In order to give the combination of a timeless God and tensed time a fair shot, I’ll now examine the Growing Block theory. I’ll argue that it doesn’t fare any better than presentism does when paired with a timeless God.

(2.2) TIMELESS GOD AND GROWING BLOCK?

Leftow sets the scene for his argument that a timeless God and presentism are compatible by first imagining how Growing Block time might look to a timeless God. He suggests that, for every stage of the block’s growth, a timeless God would be able to ‘see’ it as it is at that stage (2009: 307-8). From God’s timeless perspective, He will have, at once, multiple experiences which are ‘images’ of the block at all of its various stages of growth (ibid.: 308). Collectively, these ‘images’ will be of the whole of time. Leftow draws an analogy with looking at once upon different images of a child taken on successive birthdays. He says ‘though no individual photo of the child captures any process of growth, collectively, the photos present the process by presenting some stages in it’ (ibid.).
For similar reasons to the previous section, I think that Growing Block theory isn’t compatible with a timeless God. Given the assumption that God is atemporal, He’d have to *timelessly* perceive these different stages, so the question becomes whether it’s coherent to suppose that change can be perceived without being undergone by the perceiver. We’ve seen that Leftow attempts to persuade us that this is plausible through his example of somebody *instantaneously* seeing into many times when looking up into the night sky. The thought is that it’s not much harder to imagine God *timelessly* seeing many different times. However, when we look at the stars, we see them all *as if* they were present. Importantly, if we are to preserve God’s omniscience, He’d have to see each moment of time *when* it’s present (at the block’s leading edge), and when no other times are present – and this, I contend, isn’t a feat that can be accomplished timelessly. At each moment, new events that hadn’t previously existed become a part of reality, and moments that were once present recede into the past. It simply can’t be that all moments of time are somehow timelessly ‘recorded’ in God’s atemporal standpoint ‘as if’ they’re present, like a complete series of photographs of reality, because then God still lacks knowledge of a fundamental feature of reality: which moment is objectively *now*.

A well-known objection to Growing Block theory is that *nobody* can actually know which moment is objectively ‘now’. The idea is that, because the present *and* the past exist, then everybody at every moment (past and present) will be thinking that the time at which they exist is the privileged present. They can’t all be right, because at any time only one moment is privileged as the present. Moreover, it’s been argued that growing blockers don’t have a (forthcoming) response to this. They can’t argue (as presentists would) that we know that the current moment is objectively ‘now’ because it’s the *only* moment that exists. They equally can’t argue (as tenseless theorists would) that ‘now’ means the moment at which I utter that sentence (Braddon Mitchell 2004: 199–200). To summarise, we can’t be sure that what seems to us to be the objective present isn’t actually a moment in the past of the objective present, because the past is just as real as the present, and we have ‘no independent access’ (Braddon-Mitchell 2004: 200) to where the leading edge of

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the block is. It’s thought that growing block theorists can’t respond that the past exists in a ‘less real’ way from the present, because this would chip away at the core of the theory, which after all says that present and past exist *simpliciter*.

Granting that we humans mightn’t be able to know that it’s truly ‘now’ *now* if reality is indeed a growing block, this is unacceptable for an omniscient God, because such a being can’t be subject to these epistemological limitations. I therefore venture that God’s knowledge must change objectively, in order to be continually aware of time’s passage, and to be continually updated with the moment that’s at the block’s leading edge. Leftow suggests that a timeless God views a complete series of ‘snapshots’, featuring the block at every stage of its growth *when* it was at that stage. However, we’re then not working with a genuine Growing Block theory of time after all, because the Growing Block theory must preserve the thesis that all that exists *simpliciter* is the past and present. If, from God’s perspective, *all* moments of time can be perceived equally (including those of the would-be future), then we’re instead working with a tenseless theory of time, given that God’s perspective ought to be of ultimate reality.

Having argued that the growing block theory is susceptible to many of the same problems as presentism when paired with a timeless God, we’ve just one dynamical theory of time remaining. I’ll argue that, although more promising than its A-theory rivals at being compatible with an atemporal God, MST nevertheless emerges as unsuccessful.

**(2.3) TIMELESS GOD AND MST?**

MST, although arguably the least popular tensed theory of time, has perhaps the best chance of success at upholding divine atemporality. This is due to all moments of time existing as a part of ultimate reality. God’s knowledge doesn’t have to change to encompass new forms of reality, as – say – a once-present moment ceases to exist, or a new moment becomes present. Bearing this thought in mind, we can see that Garrett DeWeese is mistaken when he employs the premise that, on tensed time, ‘the future does not exist *at all*, in any sense’ (2004: 182), for his conclusion that a timeless God entails tenseless time. MST, a tensed theory, denies the claim that the future doesn’t exist. Rather, it claims that *all* moments of time exist. One moment, the
present, is privileged (though not ontologically), and the future is every moment that succeeds it.

In spite of this, I still think that MST is incompatible with a timeless God. At each moment of time, there remains a moment which is privileged as the present – and this moment changes objectively. Using this theory’s eponymous metaphor, this is the moment illuminated by the spotlight. This, I submit, isn’t something that can be known by a timeless God. He may indeed be able to see all moments of time as equally real, as they are on MST, but the element that makes this theory dynamic is that the present moment changes. If we allow that God knows that first one moment is privileged, and then another, we’ve again introduced sequence into His life, and we’ve failed to uphold divine timelessness. Alternatively, if we respond that, from God’s perspective, He sees ‘at once’ all of the images of reality at every time (so that presumably every moment is illuminated by the spotlight), then we’ve two unacceptable options to choose from. Either, because God’s perspective is privileged, not only is every moment of time equally real (as MST can accept), but also every moment is privileged in the same way – and hence, in effect, no moment is privileged. We therefore have tenseless time. On the other hand, if we allow that there are two equal perspectives: one in which the present moment changes, and the other in which it doesn’t, we’ve strayed unacceptably far from the classical picture of MST whereby reality as a whole features an objectively moving spotlight.

This section has examined the compatibility of a timeless God with tensed time. I outlined Leftow’s argument that a timeless God can exist outside of presentist time, and argued that it either mis-represents presentism, or else it fails to uphold the idea that God is truly timeless. By attempting to marry together these two theories, Leftow is, I argued, trying to have his cake and eat it, because as we’ve seen there’s a great tension between them. To give tensed time a fair shot at being linked with a timeless God, I also considered the compatibility of a timeless God with Growing Block theory and MST, respectively. I argued that these combinations also fail. If we claim (as Leftow

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14 Admittedly, this might be a ‘second level’ of tenseless time, because all moments of time are illuminated by the spotlight, but this would be tenseless time nonetheless – because no moment would be privileged by the spotlight. Another spotlight would need to be introduced to fill this role, and restore tense to MST.
does) that time is tensed, *and* God is timelessly aware of all of these moments of dynamical time, then we lose what’s so important to the metaphysics of these theories of time: they’re theories about reality, *simpliciter*. It simply won’t do for there to be different modes of existence. At best, this would mean that we’ve some kind of ‘pseudo’ version of these tensed theories of time, and at worst (for A-theorists, at least), it means that (privileging God’s perspective as being of ultimate reality) time is tenseless after all.

In fact, based on the foregoing discussion, I’d argue that there’s an inconsistent triad between divine timelessness, omniscience, and tensed time (see Fig. 1). If God knows about all of tensed time at each moment, then He’s not timeless. If He timelessly knows about all events ‘at once,’ then time isn’t tensed. If, however, He timelessly exists outside of tensed time, then we can’t uphold divine omniscience. This – in addition to my arguments against atemporalism in Parts 1-3 – is independently disappointing for the atemporalist in the sense that they’re *forced* to be tenseless theorists. This might be all well and good to most atemporalists, but I’ll now argue that temporalists at least have the freedom to *choose* between the tensed and tenseless theories of time. I’ll consider the alternative manner of shaking up the traditional ways of pairing divine eternity with one’s theory of time; I’ll examine the compatibility of a *temporal* God and *tenseless* time. I’ll argue that it *is* a coherent way to model God’s relation to time, and that it even boasts independent benefits. I’ll also briefly speculate about the picture of a kenotically incarnate God within tenseless time.
(3) NEW DIRECTIONS: TEMPORAL GOD AND TENSELESS TIME

An initial noteworthy preliminary is that being a temporalist (regardless of whether time is considered tensed or tenseless) needn’t commit one to a particular stance on time’s finitude (or lack of it). Divine ‘everlastingness’ appears to suggest that time must itself be without a beginning (and end), in order to preserve the notion that God Himself is without a beginning (and end). One could, however, maintain that God is temporally everlasting because, at every moment of time (whether time be finite or infinite), God exists. In taking this stance, one can remain non-committal about the everlastingness of time itself.

Furthermore, temporalists needn’t worry about their position imposing by definition some restriction upon God’s sovereignty because of His being somehow ‘contained within’ time. As was discussed in the previous chapter, they could adopt (some version of) a relationist account of God’s relation to time, and maintain that time is nothing over and above a system of relations between events and entities. Alternatively, temporalists could be substantivalists and argue that, although points of time exist independently of the events that exist at them, they don’t exist independently of God, who creates all points of time and sustains them in existence. I therefore maintain that the temporalist is on equal footing with the atemporalist regarding ability to preserve divine sovereignty.

15 Being committed to finite time could lead the temporalist to a dilemma between, on the one hand, God Himself being finite (unacceptable on classical theism), and on the other hand God existing in some alternative state before the beginning of time, which would require further elaboration. It verges on Craig’s ‘hybrid’ account discussed in Chapter 7 and, as was mentioned there, this isn’t without problems of its own. Alternatively, if the temporalist were to claim that time is infinite, then a different dilemma seems to face them. They could claim either that the universe is nevertheless finite and created, or that the universe, too, exists infinitely into the past. The former horn seems to unacceptably detract from God’s status as creator, although there’s some scope to argue that God is still logically (or metaphysically) prior to creation, and is thus sufficiently independent from it to remain its creator. The former horn, however, on which God is presumably infinite, leads the temporalist headlong into worries about what God was doing before He created the universe, and why He didn’t create sooner. I don’t think that these dilemmas are unavoidable, however. I simply wanted to note that temporalists of all stripes aren’t forced to opt for one particular horn.
(3.1) FEATURES OF THE ACCOUNT

We’re now ready to elucidate the features of this account whereby a temporal God persists through tenseless time – or four-dimensional spacetime, for that matter. The most common account of persistence through tenseless time is *perdurance*: the view that we persist by having distinct temporal parts throughout our existence (Lewis 1986a: 202). The opposing account is *endurance*, where something persists by being ‘wholly present’ at each time that it exists (ibid.), such that it doesn’t have temporal parts: only spatial parts. David Lewis invites us to imagine perdurance through time as similar to the way that a road winds its way through space: ‘part of it is here and part of it is there…none of it is wholly present at two different places’ (ibid.).

I venture that the same is the case for God, on this account. He is made up of temporal parts, or ‘time-slices’, and at every moment of time there exists a distinct divine temporal part, and no distinct part is present at two different places. However, God still exists as a whole, unified being, because time itself exists as a whole, with all of its parts being equally real. In turn, all of God’s temporal parts are equally real, with none existing in a ‘privileged’ sense, because time is tenseless. God’s persistence can therefore be represented by a ‘time’ worm that has a part at every moment of time. He therefore exists in a more robust sense than all other creatures because He perdures through the whole of time: there’s no moment at which a temporal part of Him isn’t located. Furthermore, God’s temporal parts are unified by the causal continuity between them. According to Lewis, ‘[a perduring thing] stays more or less the same because of the way its later temporal parts depend causally for their existence and character on the ones just before’ (1986b: xiii). It could therefore be argued that God is a unified being because of the causal connections that connect His later temporal parts with His earlier ones. For example, God’s earlier temporal part in which He witnesses a world in which humans are in a fallen state and sin abounds, is causally connected with His later temporal part in which He decides to become incarnate as a response to human sin.

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16 Henceforth, I’ll talk about ‘time’ instead of spacetime, given that God’s relation to *time* is the subject of this thesis. As in the previous chapter, however, I think that the debate is certainly intelligible when considered in terms of spacetime as a whole, particularly due to the strong compatibility of tenseless time and relativity theory.
I know of no other account of this sort, although Mullins considers (before dismissing) something similar for Christ’s human nature (2016: 186). He imagines a model in which the Son’s human nature perdures through spacetime, in conjunction with a timeless God. His motivation for doing so has to do with the Son’s ‘becoming’ incarnate: Mullins is looking for a way in which the atemporalist can avoid claiming that the Son ‘began’ to be incarnate. We saw back in Chapter 1 that this isn’t an easy business for the atemporalist – and Mullins himself thinks that divine timelessness should be abandoned. Mullins suggests that, if Christ’s human nature perdures through spacetime, then there will be no moment at which the Son ‘began’ to be related to it. However, he then objects to this view, claiming that it fails (contrary to orthodoxy) to preserve the numerical identity of the Son and Jesus Christ – because part of Christ is composed of temporal parts, but this isn’t the case for the Son (ibid.). My account differs from that of Mullins, and (I think) avoids this problem. I’m supposing that the Son as a person is composed of temporal parts – not merely that His incarnate human nature is so composed. On my account, a unity of temporal parts, which includes the temporal parts of the life of Christ, composes one single person. If somebody were to argue that these parts don’t compose one single person who remains the same person through time, then they’d be begging the question against perdurantism. This fallacy also runs counter to the approach of my thesis, which has so far (using the incarnation as a lens) favoured an understanding of God as temporal. If He’s indeed temporal, He must persist in one way or another, and we can’t rule out a major account of persistence simply by denying the very conclusion that it offers.

I think that, in addition to being a coherent account of God’s relation to time that ought to be taken seriously, this account also enjoys independent benefits. Firstly, it aligns with modern physics regarding time’s tenseless nature. The special and general theories of relativity (STR & GTR), developed by Einstein, are at the forefront of our current ‘best science.’ Both state that we need a union between ‘points of space’ and ‘instants of time’, into a spacetime, and that, unlike with Newtonian physics, there’s no such thing as ‘absolute’ distance or simultaneity. Rather, on STR time is a relative quantity, which depends upon the reference frame from which it’s measured (Harrington 2015: 151). For our purposes, the important thing to note is that STR and GTR
strongly suggest that sets of events can’t be ‘absolutely present to’ one another in the way that the tensed theory of time requires (Harrington 2015: 85). That is, whether or not two events are ‘simultaneously present’ (such as my writing this chapter and Cyril Ramaphosa being sworn in as President of South Africa) isn’t something that we can judge absolutely, because simultaneity is relative. According to tensed theories of time, however, the present moment is a feature of reality that’s objectively privileged, and doesn’t depend on observers and reference frames. Furthermore, the tenseless theory of time sits better with the unification of space and time into a spacetime universe. Of course, there have been attempts to rescue tensed theories of time from the clutches of STR and GTR, but it’s nevertheless widely recognised that the tenseless theory of time has a significant advantage over the tensed theory here.

This being said, my project is one which prioritises the metaphysics of the incarnation over all else, so I’ll not place too much weight on this ‘physics first’ victory. Indeed, I think that temporalists can still help themselves to the ‘classic’ version of their account whereby God exists within tensed time. It’s nevertheless good to note that this alternative temporalist account, as well at (I’ll argue) preserving a consistent and orthodox metaphysics of the incarnation, is also one that marries well with modern physics.

Having sketched how the picture of a temporal God existing within tenseless time might look, I’ll now suggest ways in which I think it can handle the three aspects of the incarnation that I prioritised in this thesis: i) the Son’s becoming incarnate, ii) avoiding the incoherence problem, and iii) the Son’s glorification. I’ll deal with each of these in turn.

(3.2) TEMPORAL GOD, TENSELESS TIME, AND KENOTICISM

In Chapter 2, I argued that temporalists can overcome the problem posed by kind-essentialism, and can consistently explain how a divine being becomes human. I think that my account, being temporalist, can likewise avoid kind-essentialist worries in the ways I suggested. I venture that this account only differs from general temporalist accounts in that it spells out in more detail how the Son persists through time. The Son ‘becomes incarnate’ in the

17 See Zimmerman (2008) for a defence of presentism in this regard. See also Skow (2015) chapters 8-9 for an argument that a modified version of MST is compatible with relativity.
traditional kenotic way if time is tenseless: He freely gives up His omniscience and omnipotence, and takes on a human body. I would explain the intrinsic change that the Son goes through by appealing to His temporal parts. The Son has an earlier temporal part in which He’s omnipotent and omniscient, and considers making a huge sacrifice and taking on human form. He also has a later temporal part (causally related to the earlier one), in which He has divested Himself of omnipotence and omniscience, and in which He has a human body.

In the paper that formed much of the basis for discussion in Chapter 7, Le Poidevin worries about assigning different persistence conditions to God, on the one hand, and humans, on the other. More specifically, he considers combining a picture of God as an enduring being, with humans as perduring beings, where time is tenseless. Le Poidevin’s worry is generated by considering the Son becoming incarnate, and whether or not He’d remain a continuant (an enduring being) when He becomes human. Le Poidevin asks:

Does he remain a continuant? Then he does not truly enter into our (four-dimensionalist) condition. Does he cease to be a continuant, and become instead simply a process with different temporal parts? Then it is not truly the Son who becomes incarnate, but rather a process somehow continuous with the Son’s pre-incarnate life. The Son himself goes out of existence at that point. No: incarnational doctrine does not sit happily with different approaches to divine and human persistence (2017: 222).

Le Poidevin is worried that, if the incarnate Son continues to endure, and humans persist by perduring, then He’ll not have become ‘truly human’. Accounting for the Son’s continual humanity whilst He’s incarnate on earth and in heaven is a hugely important part of the incarnation, so I’m in agreement that it won’t do to opt for an account which gives us a very limited sense of the Son’s humanity. On the other hand, Le Poidevin argues that if the

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18 Le Poidevin, recall, doesn’t use the terms ‘perdurance’ and ‘endurance’ in his discussion, but rather talks about persisting things as ‘occurrents’ and ‘continuants’, respectively.

19 We saw in the previous chapter that it’s part of Le Poidevin’s argument that humans in fact endure. Here, he’s simply entertaining the thought of combining an enduring God with perduring humans.
Son does cease to be an enduring being when He becomes incarnate, then He, the Son, doesn’t truly enter into our condition – instead, some ‘process continuous with the Son’s pre-incarnate life’ becomes incarnate, and the Son ceases to exist. Presumably, this thought hinges on the (plausible) premise that one and the same being can’t change its manner of persistence and continue to exist. However, if the Son has always been a perduring being (as I’m suggesting here), then we avoid Le Poidevin’s worry, because in both his pre-incarnate and incarnate states, the Son perdures through tenseless time.20 I therefore maintain that my account has the resources to explain the Son ‘becoming incarnate’.

In Chapter 4 I argued that kenoticism (which, in its most credible form, entails temporalism of some sort), is the best way to avoid the incoherence problem that’s so readily plagued metaphysical accounts of the incarnation. I therefore think it’s an advantage of the account proposed here that it incorporates this understanding of the incarnation. The kenotically incarnate Son doesn’t possess omnipotence or omniscience at any of His incarnate ‘timeslices’, because at these points He’s freely given up these attributes. It’s this that makes Him ‘fully human’.

In line with orthodoxy, though, the Son remains ‘fully divine’ whilst He’s incarnate, and the tenseless theorist can maintain this is for three reasons. Firstly, the Son is causally connected with the (equally real) earlier temporal parts of His life, in which He does possess omnipotence and omniscience.21 Secondly, His omnibenevolence is retained. I argued in Chapter 4 that God’s unwavering omnibenevolence is essential to His divinity, and is a necessary attribute that there’s no possibility of Him giving up. In fact, it’s the very essence of and motivation for His kenotic sacrifice, and it’s retained when He becomes human. Thirdly, the incarnate Son is ‘fully divine’ thanks to the

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20 Le Poidevin’s own solution to his worry, discussed in Chapter 7, was to argue that God and humans are both enduring beings – or ‘occurrences’, so the Son doesn’t need to change His mode of persistence in order to become incarnate.

21 Likewise, He’s connected with the equally real later temporal parts of His life, where He’s regained omniscience and omnipotence. Perhaps this isn’t such a strong guarantee of divinity, however, because of the asymmetry of causal connections meaning that the Son is only able to regain these divine attributes as a result of His sacrifice made when He lacked them.
traditional kenotic modification of ‘essential’ divine properties.\(^{22}\) I therefore maintain that temporalists who adhere to tenseless time can explain the Son ‘becoming’ incarnate and avoid the incoherence problem, and do so using a kenotic account. In fact, I think that the only difference between this discussion and that in Chapters 2 and 4 is that here I’ve simply spelled out in more detail how the Son would persist if time is tenseless.

I’ll now argue that this account can also fulfil the requirements of the Son’s glorification, which is the third and final aspect of the incarnation that this thesis privileges. According to the kenoticist, the Son is able to become ‘fully human’ because of His (voluntary) divestiture of the attributes omniscience and omnipotence. I noted earlier that the kenoticist’s claim to be able to satisfy the full humanity of the Son in this way is equally what makes things problematic when we consider the exaltation. The kenoticist must be able to provide an account of how it is that the exalted Son, in spite of regaining His omniscience and omnipotence, remains ‘fully human’. This requirement is a highly important aspect of the doctrine of the incarnation: the glorified Son retains His human nature to signify that we’re also capable of such glorification.

In Chapter 6, I argued that temporalists are able to circumvent these worries, because they can appeal to the Son’s experiential humanity when He’s exalted. He regains full possession of omnipotence and omniscience, as well as total recall of ‘what it’s like’ to be the human Jesus. I stressed that in order to be experientially human, it’s necessary that one have been ontologically human. I then argued that no conflict is generated between omniscience and omnipotence, on the one hand, and experiential humanity, on the other.

If we venture away from ‘classical’ accounts of divine temporality whereby time is tensed, and instead consider the combination of a temporal God and tenseless time, I think that we can still make sense of the exaltation. This is in a similar way to that suggested in Chapter 6. In particular, this is thanks to some important aspects of tenseless time, which I’ll now spell out.

My suggestion is that tenseless theorists appeal specifically to the temporal parts of the Son’s existence in which He’s human, as a means of

\(^{22}\) I refer readers back to discussion in Chapter 4, where I discussed the traditional kenotic strategy that the requisite divine property isn’t, for instance, ‘being omniscient’ \textit{simpliciter}, but rather ‘being omniscient unless freely and temporarily choosing to be otherwise’.\)
accounting for His experiential humanity when He’s exalted. These temporal parts are equally as real as all other temporal parts of the Son, and they’re causally related to the parts of His existence in which He regains His omnipotence and omniscience. If time is tenseless, the moments (or temporal parts) where the Son has given up His omniscience and omnipotence are just as real as the moments (or temporal parts) in which He has these divine properties. It therefore seems that the tenseless theorist can account for a robust sense in which the exalted Son is ‘experientially human’: she can refer to causally-connected, earlier time-slices in which He’s sacrificed His omniscience and omnipotence, and say that He’s human in virtue of these earlier time-slices, which are just as much a part of reality as the later ones.

I argued in Chapter 6 that (among other things) the exalted Son can remain human thanks to His perfect ‘recall’ of ‘what it’s like’ to be human. I think that the tenseless theorist of time has the potential to strengthen her argument even more here, using this strategy. That is, she can appeal to the time-slices of Christ’s life in which He (tenselessly) lacks omniscience and omnipotence, and experiences human limitations and temptations. She can argue that this experience of being human, and the Son’s resulting perfect empathy for the human race remains with Him in heaven, because of His causal relation to these earlier time-slices. In fact, the tenseless theorist can claim that the Son does something more robust than ‘recall’ what it’s like to be human, and ‘retain’ such knowledge. Rather, being omniscient, He’s always aware of these moments as an objective part of reality. He’s aware of these earlier time-slices, and (being omniscient) knows that they’re no less a part of reality than the time simultaneous with His recollection of them. The tenseless theorist can argue that this is sufficient for the Son’s ‘perpetual humanity’ at all of His exaltation time-slices. As such, tenseless theorists can claim that it’s true

23 Importantly, this added knowledge that comes from being human, and empathising with humans, doesn’t have to mean that Christ wasn’t omniscient prior to the incarnation. Rather, one can argue that when unincarnate He knew all of the propositional knowledge that was to be known, and merely added to His experiential knowledge in the incarnation – namely, the knowledge of what it’s like to be a human. However, I would argue that the Son would fail to be omniscient if, upon being glorified, He were to forget this experiential knowledge that He possess at His incarnate time-slices. This is because to forget something (whether or not it’s propositional knowledge) does seem to prevent omniscience.
‘now’ (at the time simultaneous with this utterance) that the Son is fully human, and this is thanks to the existence of His earlier time-slices in which He lacks omniscience and omnipotence. Having sketched how temporalists might account for the Son’s incarnation within tenseless time, I’ll now consider and respond to what I think are the most troubling objections.

(3.3) STAVING OFF OBJECTIONS

There are no doubt many possible objections to this very specific account of God’s relation to time, and I’ll now outline those I consider to be the most troubling. Firstly, many hackles might be raised at the thought of God having temporal parts. The strongest underlying reason for this is, I think, because this flouts the doctrine of divine simplicity (DDS). According to traditional definitions of DDS, God has no parts (whether these are spatial, temporal, or other), and He’s identical to His attributes. However, DDS has recently been objected to on a number of grounds, most notably that if God is supposed to be identical to each of His divine attributes, then it follows that He’s a divine attribute (and that all of His attributes are identical to each other) (Adams & Robson, manuscript). Moreover, I think it’s quite clear that the framing of my thesis is open to the charge of flouting DDS anyway, because from the outset I’ve been open to the possibility of the incarnation revealing that God has temporal parts, if such an account can uphold incarnational orthodoxy.

Furthermore, I think that any account of divine temporality (whether time is tenseless or tensed) will flout DDS. A temporal God existing within tensed time would have a life that changes objectively with the flow of time, which is far from simple. Moreover, temporalists who think (or assume) that time is tensed still have to pick the way in which God persists through time: either perdurance or endurance. Here, I’ve simply spelled out in more detail how God would persist.

Relatedly, an account which ascribes temporal parts to God seems far less worrying than one that ascribes spatial parts to Him, because on a latter account it seems (worryingly) that we can get (geographically) closer to God by travelling in a particular direction. In light of this, the idea of a God comprised of temporal parts seems far less worrying. What is more, although this account
postulates a unified ‘spacetime’, it doesn’t require God to be a ‘spacetime’ worm: only a time worm. This could, in fact, be another way (besides everlasteningness) in which God’s existence differs from our own), and grounds God’s superiority.

Granted that I’m permitted to flout the traditional DDS, then, a related and more forceful worry is that I’ve proposed an account so radically ‘unsimple’ that it threatens the doctrine of the Trinity. I’ve argued that the Son is a ‘time worm’: that He’s comprised of unified, causally-connected ‘time-slices’. Presumably, then, the other members of the Trinity must also persist in the same way. The Father and Spirit can’t be the very same time worm as the Son, for His time-slices involve Him doing things that they simply don’t do. For example, the time-slice of the Son in which He’s getting baptised cannot, surely, be a time-slice in the life of the Father or Spirit. It seems that the Father and Spirit must themselves be separate time worms, if they too are temporal.

It might be objected, therefore, that I’ve separated the ‘substance’ of the persons of the Trinity so far that I’m committing to some form of Tritheism: in other words, that I’m (unacceptably) postulating three separate Gods, rather than three persons who are the same God. My response here would be to maintain that my account fits under a ‘Social Trinitarian’ umbrella. The Social theory of the Trinity was discussed in Chapter 4, and was in fact relied upon to defend a kenotic incarnation, so it’s quite consistent that it be employed again here. To recap, this is the view that the three persons of the Trinity are united into one God by the loving relationship that exists between them, but are three persons because of the different loving relations that they bear to one another (Swinburne forthcoming: 8). I’d therefore claim that part of the reason why these different relations are distinct is because they’re borne by separate time worms. Moreover, persons are unified time-worms, on this account, so I’m not exaggerating the accepted understanding that the Trinity comprises of three persons: I’m simply suggesting a means of cashing this out.

Having outlined (and responded to) worries that stem from theological concerns, I’ll now consider some that are more purely metaphysical in nature. One such objection is that tenseless time poses a problem for human freedom.

\[24\] I explained in the introduction that I’ll not take a stance on whether all three members of the Trinity must have the same relation to time, although I gave reasons for my general speculation that they must.
in that God knows how I act in (what’s to me) my future. God’s knowledge allegedly makes it impossible for me to act otherwise, when the time comes. I respond that this is only a problem insofar as the B-series in general poses a problem for human freedom – nothing more problematic is added if we suppose that God knows the tenseless fact that, say, I buy a puppy in 2019. Rather, the existence of the fact itself is where the problem (allegedly) lies. The traditional response from the tenseless theorist here is, briefly, that although the future exists as a part of reality, this doesn’t entail the necessity of my actions, and so doesn’t constrain them. The B-theorist can still maintain that our actions at an earlier time causally (in some sense) affect our actions at a later time.

A different objection has to do with the possibility of our being able to claim (given tenseless time) that it’s true at times earlier than the incarnation that the Son was fully human. An opponent might argue that, given the Son’s omniscience and the equal existence of all times, just as the Son is fully human at times later than the incarnation thanks to His knowledge of His human time-slices, so He should also be fully human at times earlier than the incarnation, for the very same reason. This clearly seems to be a counterintuitive result, though: we surely don’t want our account of the incarnation to commit us to the view that, before a temporal God became human, He was human already. This seems to make very little sense, especially for a transformationalist account such as kenoticism that maintains that the Son became human by being transformed into a human at a particular time.

By way of response, I’d appeal to the asymmetry of causation making it the case that we can’t make the same claims about a person’s relation to their later time-slices as we can about their relation to their earlier time-slices. Although all moments of time are equally real, it’s nevertheless consistent with the tenseless theory of time that there are important (asymmetric) causal relations between the earlier and later time-slices of a person, such that earlier time-slices can cause later time-slices, but not vice versa. At any rate, it’s part of Lewis’s account of perdurance that persons are unified by causal connections between their earlier and later temporal parts, as I outlined above. I therefore argue that, because of the asymmetry of causal connections between temporal

parts, we can’t say that the Son is human before the incarnation by appealing to
the later time-slices in which He’s human. Instead, the Son’s not being human
is amongst the causal conditions for His ‘becoming’ human (in a form of
genuine sacrifice) at a later time. I therefore venture that one can only say ‘it’s
time now that the Son is fully human’ at times simultaneous with and later than the
incarnation. At all of these times, one can justify one’s argument by appealing
to the time-slices in which the Son is incarnate, but (because of the asymmetry
of causal relations) they can’t do the same at times earlier than the incarnation.

A final objection is that, when claiming that the exalted Son is
experientially human, I placed a substantial amount of weight on the existence
of earlier time-slices of His life in which He’s human. It might be argued that
this reliance is simply too tenuous. After all, one might say, it’s then true now
(at the time simultaneous with this utterance) that ‘Emily is on a bike ride’,
largely due to the fact that an earlier time-slice of me was doing just this. In
response, I suggest that the reason why the exalted Son can count as human,
and why the thesis-writing Emily can’t count as on a bike ride, is thanks to the
other aspect of my account: the Son’s perfect knowledge of what it’s like to be
human. Admittedly, I can remember what my bike ride was like, and recall
various sensations from it, but my memory of it is imperfect due to the way
that I experience time. God, however, being omniscient, knows (at the times
simultaneous with His exaltation time-slices) perfectly what it’s like to be human,
and to lack knowledge and power. In fact, it could be argued that God knows
about these time-slices as clearly as we know about (what appears to be) the
present moment, and that our memories of (what appear to be) past moments
are mere copies of this perfect and infallible divine knowledge of all times. I
therefore suggest that it’s this difference in divine and human knowledge that
drives a wedge between the Son’s perpetual humanity, on the one hand, and
my (alleged) perpetual bike ride, on the other.

(4) CONCLUSION

The debate between the tensed and tenseless theories of time is
arguably the apogee of discussion in the philosophy of time. We’ve seen here
that it has a clear bearing on the issue of God’s relation to time. I’ve examined

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the effects of challenging the traditional assumptions that a timeless God exists outside of tenseless time, and a temporal God within tensed time. I firstly considered how things might look if God is timeless and time tensed, provoked by Leftow’s argument that God can exist outside of presentist time. I concluded that, if we want a timeless God to be omniscient, we can’t uphold any dynamical theory of time. Sharpening this point, I suggested that there’s an inconsistent triad between divine omniscience, divine timelessness, and (all accounts of) tensed time. Atemporalists (as well as being unable to account for the doctrine of the incarnation) have only one option regarding the passage of time: they must be tenseless theorists. I next outlined a new account on which God is temporal, and time tenseless. I argued that this is a coherent account, which boasts independent benefits besides. Moreover, I argued that this account is able to accommodate the Son becoming kenotically incarnate. Divine temporalists can therefore choose between being tensed or tenseless theorists of time, I submit, which is a luxury that divine atemporalists can’t afford.
CONCLUDING REMARKS

All praise to Thee, eternal God
Who, clothed in garb of flesh and blood,
Dost take a manger for Thy throne,
While worlds on worlds are Thine alone.
Hallelujah! (Luther 1993)

The nature of God’s eternity has long beguiled Philosophers and Theologians. It’s a particularly complex and multi-layered question because of how deeply it’s interwoven with other commitments that are themselves up for debate, such as the nature of time itself, the way we understand various divine attributes, and – importantly for this thesis – the specific religion that we’re working with. I’ve been considering a Christian God, using Christianity’s central and sacrosanct commitment to the Son of God becoming incarnate as a lens for examining the nature of God’s eternity.

I’ve privileged three important elements of the incarnation, and devoted the first three parts of my thesis to each of them in turn. Part one considered the Son ‘becoming’ incarnate. Chapter 1 argued that atemporalists have at their disposal only one provisionally viable way to make sense of such a transition. They can’t argue that the Son changes intrinsically when He becomes incarnate, because such a change requires one to be subject to the passage of time. Neither can atemporalists help themselves to Leftow’s account of modal variation as a means for understanding the Son becoming incarnate, I argued. This is because, whether we’re genuine modal realists or ersatz modal realists, unpacking Leftow’s claim leads to us being unable to achieve his desired modal variation. This leaves only one option, I argued: the Son ‘becomes’ incarnate because of an extrinsic change. Atemporalists can adopt a compositionalist account of the incarnation, whereby Christ is composed of a divine ‘part’ as well as two human ‘parts’: a body and soul. They can argue that the Son became incarnate when His human body and soul came into existence and joined with Him, thus causing Him to change extrinsically as a result.
Chapter 2 considered whether and how temporalists can account for the Son becoming incarnate. I outlined the worries that temporalists face in light of the various commitments related to kind-essentialism. Most notably, these were the worries that a divine being can’t ‘take on’ humanity, because this is to become a member of a natural kind – which according to kind-essentialism is impossible. Related to this is another commitment that to belong to a particular natural kind requires one to possess – of necessity – a particular set of properties. This commitment also poses a problem for a temporal God becoming incarnate because of the alleged conflict between ‘divine’ and ‘human’ properties. I outlined several responses to these kind-essentialist worries, most notably from Sharpe and Morris. Morris re-considers the properties that are necessarily required for being human, and also draws a distinction between being ‘merely’ human (like us) and ‘fully’ human (like the Son). Sharpe outlines a revised version of kind-essentialist commitments, such that the Son can consistently be both divine and human. This requires him to distinguish between being ‘dominantly’ and ‘accidentally’ a member of a particular kind. I argued that, by braiding together the insights of these arguments, the atemporalist is able to overcome kind-essentialist reservations.

As a case study, I applied my arguments to Merricks’s physicalist understanding of the incarnation. Of course, I noted that temporalists are equally free to simply deny kind-essentialism, but I wanted to argue that even given kind-essentialist worries, the temporalist has the resources to be home and dry.

In Part two, I turned to the second non-negotiable aspect of the incarnation: that the incarnate Son was fully divine, fully human and yet one single person. Arguments that Christ can’t be all of these things are grouped under the head of the ‘incoherence problem’. Chapter 3 considered whether atemporalists have the resources to respond to this. I argued that they have just one model available – compositionalism – and that it doesn’t give them the resources to avoid incoherence. I examined the atemporalist strategy of ascribing the conflicting properties of divinity and humanity (such as being omnipotent and limited in power) to different parts of the composite Christ, so that incoherence is avoided. However, I argued that on the one hand this strategy can’t avoid inflating the composite Christ into two persons, so we have
Nestorian heresy. On the other hand, attempts to avoid this unwelcome result lead atemporalists headlong into the heresy of Apollinarianism – an equally unacceptable result.

I turned back to temporalism in Chapter 4, and argued that it can fare much better at avoiding the incoherence problem. This is no thanks to two minds models, however – as I argued at the start of this chapter. I claimed that these models, when understood as compositionalist, face similar worries to atemporal compositionalism. Understood in an alternative, transformationalist, sense in which one mind comes to ‘contain’, or ‘include’ the other, I argued that we end up either ascribing false beliefs to the divine mind, or else impinging upon the freedom of the human mind. It’s an alternative transformationalist model, kenoticism, that I argued is able to come to the rescue for temporalists and successfully avoid the incoherence problem. I responded to objections that a kenotically incarnate God can’t be truly divine, and also that a kenotically incarnate God can’t be immutable. I concluded this part of the thesis by alleging that temporalism alone is able to avoid the incoherence problem.

Part three considered the final element of the incarnation that I’m privileging: the Son’s glorification. I outlined Hill’s two requirements that any satisfactory account of the glorification must be able to meet: that the exalted Son is in full possession of omnipotence and omniscience, and that the exalted Son is fully human. Hill names these the ‘exaltation’ and ‘perpetual humanity’ requirements, respectively. In Chapter 5, I argued that whilst atemporalists have no problem in accommodating the exaltation requirement, they’re unable to account for the claim that the exalted Son remains ‘fully human’. The only way that they’re able to explain this, I argued, is by appealing to the timeless truth of the Son’s humanity. However, I then argued that atemporalists are unable to provide a satisfactory explanation of what makes this truth true. This incidentally bled into a more general criticism alleged against atemporalism as a whole: that a God who exists timelessly is difficult to think of as any kind of reassuring and responsive presence.

In Chapter 6, I argued that temporalists are able to account for the Son’s glorification, thanks only to kenoticism. I argued that the two minds theory is unable to help us here, due to running into almost identical worries to
those it faced in light of the incoherence problem. I considered several responses from the two minds theorist, arguing that they either lead to heresy, or else are responses that are by no means unique to the two minds account. I next outlined a worry for kenoticists in the shape of their being unable to accommodate the claim that the exalted Son is ‘fully human’. I considered three different ways in which the kenoticist might respond to this worry. The first of these two responses had in common that (for either all or part of His incarnation) the Son didn’t need to be kenotically incarnate in order to be incarnate. I argued against both of these, because they’re in tension with the common-sense essence of kenoticism: that possessing omniscience and omnipotence are incompatible with being human. The third and final response that I considered retained this important element of kenoticism, but qualified what we mean by ‘human’. That is, I argued that the glorified Son is experientially (but not ontologically) human, and this generates no conflict with His possession of omnipotence and omniscience. I therefore concluded this part of the thesis by asserting that kenoticists (and so, temporalists) alone are able to make sense of the Son’s glorification.

Having prioritised these three aspects of the incarnation, and argued that they strongly suggest in favour of a God who exists inside of time, I then took a step back from this claim. That is, Part four examined how debates in the metaphysics of time can affect our understanding of divine eternity. I argued that such debates are the most illuminating and supportive of a temporal God, which independently supports my conclusion of Parts 1-3. Chapter 7 considered what it can mean to say that God exists ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ of time by examining the debate between substantivalists and relationists about time. I firstly argued that substantivalism has been all too readily assumed in the foregoing debate over God’s relation to time. I next examined Le Poidevin’s RR-relationist account of God’s relation to time. This attributes (at once) two senses of atemporality, and one sense of temporality, to God. I argued that both of these senses of divine atemporality face many problems, as well as being in conflict with one another. However, I argued that Le Poidevin’s sense of God existing ‘within’ RR-relationist time is coherent. When we argue that, in light of the incarnation, God ought to be ‘temporal’, we’re therefore free to understand time as either substantival or relational.
Finally, I turned in Chapter 8 to consider the debate between tensed and tenseless theories of time, demonstrating that this has a bearing on what we mean when we talk about God’s relation to time. I outlined the traditional pairings that have been assumed in the foregoing debate: a timeless God with tenseless time, and a temporal God with tensed time. I considered how we might challenge these pairings – firstly by considering Leftow’s argument that a timeless God can exist outside of presentist time. I argued that this account is incoherent, as is the picture of a timeless God existing outside of any form of tensed time. Atemporalists therefore only have tenseless time to work with. I next considered the untraditional and unexplored pairing of a temporal God and tenseless time, which I argued is coherent. I sketched how God could persist through time on this account, and suggested that this account can also accommodate the Son becoming kenotically incarnate. I concluded that temporalists are, unlike their atemporalist rivals, free to choose between time being tensed or tenseless. This flexibility can only be an added benefit for divine temporalism.

I began this thesis with the following central research question:

*Assuming an orthodox understanding of the doctrine of the incarnation, what does this tell us about God’s relation to time?*

The answer, to summarise, is that God can’t be atemporal, because a timeless God isn’t compatible with important (and orthodox) aspects of the incarnation. Rather, God (if He exists) is temporal, and He became incarnate kenotically. We’re free to make what we will of the nature of time itself, however – although I demonstrated that the picture of a temporal God can look quite different depending on our metaphysics of time. I therefore conclude that, by privileging an orthodox metaphysics of the incarnation, I have ‘found time’ for the Christian God.
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