

Conciliar Christology and the Philosophy of Mind: A New Critique of Substance Dualism

by

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Abstract

In this thesis I set forth several arguments against substance dualism and in defense of materialism (and by extension, other anthropological models like Neo-Aristotelian dualism). Despite popular claims from Christian philosophers and theologians that substance dualism is the only available—or at least the best—option for the committed orthodox Christian, I argue to the contrary. I employ a modest Christological anthropology that aids in adjudicating some thorny debates about the mind and body. Therefore, my aim in this thesis is twofold: (1) to consider whether traditional Christology ought to motivate one to be a substance dualist and (2) whether traditional Christology conflicts with materialism. As a research program, I believe this thesis is generative of new ways of thinking about both the mind and body and Christology more generally.

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1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Fall and Rise of Mind-Body Dualism

Dualistic theories of the mind were once overwhelmingly dominant. The reasons for this are varied, but religion has often been a key purveyor of it. Christianity, especially, has often been thought to “require” a dualistic view of human persons.¹ Not only were religious communities and the popular imagination shaped by dualistic intuitions, even the philosophical and scientific communities were similarly so.² But for the last several decades the philosophy of mind has been decidedly materialist, so much so that figures such as Daniel Dennett have described dualism as “not a serious view to contend with, but rather a cliff over which to push one’s opponents.”³ Experts in nearly every field, ranging from philosophy to neurobiology have agreed: materialism is true, and dualism is false. And so, materialism, in many ways, is “the religion of our time.”⁴ What’s more, even Christian theologians and philosophers have begun to take up the materialist turn despite the centuries long dominance of dualism.⁵ These are rather strong reasons to wonder if dualism is dead. And yet, despite the deep aversion to any form of dualism in the contemporary period, versions of dualism (e.g., property dualism, hylomorphism, etc.), *even substance dualism*, are seeing a sort of revival.

To be clear at this point, assuming that dualism was once dominant isn’t meant to suggest that materialism is *new* or had no sway in eras long past. Indeed, there are many historical figures that argue for purely materialistic conceptions of the world.⁶ However, the general narrative that dualistic theories of the mind were dominant for centuries before being eclipsed by materialistic theories is rather modest and well accepted. So, all I’m suggesting at this point is that the rise of dualism in the academy is a surprising turn of events.

Part of the reason for the growth of dualism once again is that despite incredible advances in modern science, consciousness remains an enigma. The lack of straightforward materialistic answers thus emboldens dualists.

¹ Dean Zimmerman, “Three Introductory Questions: Is Analytic Philosophical Theology an Oxymoron? Is Substance Dualism Incoherent? What’s in This Book, Anyway?,” in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Dean Zimmerman and Peter van Inwagen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.

² Paul M. Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness*, Third Edition (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 12; Zimmerman, “Three Introductory Questions,” 13–15.

³ D. C. Dennett, “Current Issues in the Philosophy of Mind,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1978): 252.

⁴ John R. Searle, *Mind: A Brief Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 8, 34.

⁵ See for example: Kevin J. Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature: A Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006); Nancey Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?*, Current Issues in Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Joel B. Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008); Peter van Inwagen, “I Look for the Resurrection of the Dead,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, ed. Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J. L. Menuge, and J. P. Moreland, Blackwell Companions to Philosophy (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2018); Trenton Merricks, “The Word Made Flesh: Dualism, Physicalism, and the Incarnation,” in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter Van Inwagen and Dean W. Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Dean Zimmerman, “The Compatibility of Materialism and Survival: The Falling Elevator Model,” *Faith and Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (1999).

⁶ Daniel Stoljar, “Physicalism,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Spring 2024, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2024/entries/physicalism/>>.

Arguments from consciousness like qualia have played no small part in the re-legitimization of dualism. For example, Thomas Nagel has argued that subjective phenomena are essentially connected to a single point of view—the unity of consciousness—that is irreducible to and unexplainable by purely material facts.⁷ These sorts of arguments have pushed many toward forms of dualism, or at least given plausibility to them. The “what it’s like” phenomenon, whether it is Nagel’s famous bat or our own experience of pain, love, and suffering is something reductive materialism simpliciter cannot explain, or at least explain in a way that is plausible for most ordinary thinkers—even specialists. Is it really plausible to say that we can sufficiently describe all that there is to love in a scientific way that amounts to mere material interactions? Is it plausible to think that love is simply a heat wave, or something else? Surely, most have strong intuitions to think that love has additional phenomena beyond the mere material brain functions that cannot be material alone. Similarly, Frank Jackson’s knowledge argument wherein Mary is confined to a black-and-white room where she learns everything there is to know about colors but never actually *sees and experiences* color strongly suggests that phenomenal experience isn’t equivalent to certain other facts that constitute our knowledge of the world. In this case, the dualist naturally describes these as experiences of an immaterial property. While Mary can study all the facts about colors, without *experiencing* them, there is something she doesn’t know. And this something she doesn’t know is supposed to be a fact unexplainable by materialists. Therefore, there is something beyond material nature. There is some sort of immaterial knowledge that cannot be empirically seen.⁸ If this phenomenon lacks empirical verifiability, it naturally suggests an immaterial explanation.

Similar arguments continue to be the subject of debate, but there has been considerable advancement beyond the nearly universal opinion that all forms of dualism are intellectually indefensible. Dualism is once again a view worth taking seriously. Much of the varied evidence in experience, observations, testimonies, and intuitions in favor of dualism are once again seen as defensible and academically respectable. As Tomas Bogardus has shown, even non-dualists such as Daniel Dennett, David Papineau, Christopher Hill, and Peter van Inwagen admit that it *seems* wholly implausible to believe that *every* mental state, such as those involved in consciousness, are naturalistically reduced to some materialistic state-type.⁹ Dennett himself admits that, “it does seem as if the happenings that *are* my conscious thoughts and experiences cannot be brain happenings, but must be *something else...*”¹⁰ In other words, even the most ardent materialists realize the intuitive force of not identifying all states with material states.

But many Christian philosophers in recent times have gone a step further in their retrieval of dualism. It is not simply that dualism is one relevant option among many. Nor is it enough to accept weaker views like the

⁷ Thomas Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?,” *The Philosophical Review* 83, no. 4 (October 1974): 437.

⁸ Frank Jackson, “What Mary Didn’t Know,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 83, no. 5 (May 1986): 291, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2026143>.

⁹ Tomas Bogardus, “Undefeated Dualism,” *Philosophical Studies* 165, no. 2 (September 2013): 447, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-012-9962-z>.

¹⁰ Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1991), 27.

property dualism gestured at in Nagel and Jackson's arguments. Instead, the more radical thesis of *substance* dualism is true. And more than true, it is the standard Christian position. Other views, particularly materialism, are not simply minorities but potentially *heresy*. If not heresy, views like materialism are seriously deviant and ought to be rejected. The apparent theological costs, according to such thinkers, are far too great.¹¹ And so, in a radical turn of events, instead of dualism being an unserious view altogether, it is the strong dualism of substance that these Christian philosophers argue must be accepted. As Brandon Rickabaugh and J. P. Moreland provocatively claim, “the rejection of substance dualism is most likely driven primarily by mere ideological allegiance—by faith—rather than rigorous argument.”¹² But theologians have made this same claim. Substance dualism is the “default” view of the church.¹³

Now entire volumes have been dedicated to criticizing accounts of materialism based on Christian commitments. There is a supposed dilemma for anyone committed to traditional Christianity: one must apparently accept dualism—particularly substance dualism—lest they incur theological censure. By “traditional” Christianity, I just mean orthodox, catholic, classical, or conciliar Christianity, which is any form that is well-attested to throughout the history of Christianity and represented by the major branches of Christianity with Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, or Protestant. These terms are interchangeable for me within this thesis unless noted others. And so, with the return of the plausibility of dualism in the larger philosophical community has come significant religious pressure in Christian spaces to abandon alternative concepts of the human person. Noted philosopher-theologian Oliver Crisp is rather representative when he surmises that a materialist concept of the human person “flies in the face of the entire Christian tradition.”¹⁴ For most authors today, the “intellectual boundaries” of Conciliar Christology requires complete rejection of materialism or immaterialism.¹⁵

1.2 Thesis: Substance Dualism is No Ally

Despite popular claims from Christian philosophers and theologians that substance dualism is the only available—or at least the best—option for the committed orthodox Christian, I argue to the contrary. Their conclusions (or musings, in some cases) have not been proven. In fact, substance dualism conflicts with some orthodox Christian beliefs. And there are other models of dualism such as Aristotelian versions of hylemorphism, or even models of materialism, that are more consistent with traditional Christian beliefs. And so, if one is judging conceptions of mind and body based on prior theological commitments, one cannot

¹¹ See for example: R. Keith Loftin and Joshua R. Farris, “Christian Physicalism? An Introduction,” in *Christian Physicalism? Philosophical Theological Criticisms*, ed. R. Keith Loftin and Joshua R. Farris (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018), xx.

¹² Brandon Rickabaugh and James Porter Moreland, *The Substance of Consciousness: A Comprehensive Defense of Contemporary Substance Dualism* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2024), 6.

¹³ Michael A. Wilkinson, *Crowned with Glory and Honor: A Chalcedonian Anthropology* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2024), 9.

¹⁴ Oliver D. Crisp, *God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology* (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 138.

¹⁵ Wilkinson, *Crowned with Glory and Honor*, 14–15.

simply assume a specific version of dualism as true, especially that of substance dualism. Rather, one should find alternative accounts of the human person preferable. It's simply a false dilemma to think that the Christian *must* be a substance dualist—there are a range of options available.

Therefore, my aim in this thesis is twofold: (1) to consider whether traditional Christology ought to motivate one to be a substance dualist and (2) whether traditional Christology conflicts with materialism. Given a fallacy of false alternative—that either dualism or materialism is true—these questions may appear to be the same. In some sense, this is true. But each question is distinct in focus, each examining the positive merits of a different philosophical model. My primary focus is on (1) but as I develop criticisms of substance dualism, to properly engage the criticisms of the literature against alternative models like materialism, I seek to provide models of materialism that are consistent with traditional Christology (i.e., 2). I've chosen to defend materialism especially since it is the primary target of dualist critics. Therefore, if I can rehabilitate materialism then I've by default also defended the weaker non-substance dualist models since most of the problems I discuss throughout the thesis are supposed problems for all non-substance dualist models and not simply materialism.

Now, I do not mean to argue that the general dualistic thesis that it is false that every property is exhaustively reducible and identical to a material state is false. Instead, I intend to focus on substance dualism since it is the most common view put forward by those critiquing materialism as inconsistent with orthodox Christianity. To be clear, I do not take dualism to be identical with substance dualism, as I will describe in what follows. There are other dualistic theories of mind and body. But I choose to focus my critique on *substance* dualism given its significant rise to prominence and its purveyors criticisms of other theories on grounds of Christian orthodoxy. So, while most assume that religion is the main reason to believe in dualism, I argue that religion in the form of classical Christology, rather than motivating all forms of dualism unreservedly, causes potentially unsolvable problems for substance dualism and fits better with other anthropological options.¹⁶

My thesis is essentially this: Given classical Christology, substance dualism is false. As such, my thesis is primarily negative in scope. While primarily negative, as indicated, I do construct positive accounts of materialism to show how alternative concepts are also better suited to lay claim to classical Christology. In this way, substance dualism is less salutary than alternative options. Therefore, it is sufficient for my case to show that substance dualism conflicts with traditional Christology and that other options are consistent in areas that substance dualism is not. Despite the growing trend among many Christian philosophers to cast substance dualism as the only, or best, haven for consistent Christian theology, I argue that if one seeks to

¹⁶ See for example: Searle, *Mind*, 29.

affirm classical Christology, they should jettison substance dualism in favor of another model. This does not require them to jettison *dualism* but it does insist on a rejection of *substance dualism*.

To argue my thesis, I begin with several methodological and definitional considerations to properly equip the remainder of the work. Then, I make four separate self-contained arguments against substance dualism. First, in chapter three I argue that if Jesus' numerically identical body is resurrected, then substance dualism is false. Second, in chapter four, I argue that if Jesus descends to the dead, substance dualism is false. Third, in chapter five, I argue that if Jesus becomes incarnate as a human person, substance dualism is false. Fourth, in chapter six, I argue that if the Son of God is only one person and not two, substance dualism is false. In each of these arguments I argue for the stronger claim that substance dualism is false. But I also show that the more modest option that given these various dogmatic loci, substance dualism is unlikely, and thus, less likely than other philosophical views, is appropriate. With these arguments in view, I contend that those committed to Conciliar Christology as true ought to reject substance dualism. To affirm substance dualism is to affirm, at best, an unlikely view, and at worst to admit incoherence. What unifies each argument in this thesis is the same research program. Instead of the chapters building upon each other in hierarchical fashion they serve as a cumulative case against substance dualism.

1.3 Three Thesis Preliminaries

There are several points I should address before moving on. First, what makes my thesis original, beyond novel arguments, is consistently applying a Christological research program to examine the philosophical coherence of various positions in the philosophy of mind. Most often the program for exploring the mind and body is the reverse. One examines which philosophical view one finds true independently of Christian doctrine or prior to doctrine. But in my method, Christological reflection is given priority and allowed space to suggest new ways of metaphysical thinking.¹⁷ The truth about the human person may turn out to be rather surprising, even subversive to standard natural ways of thinking.¹⁸ I will have more to say about this in the next section.

Second, my thesis attempts to open new research opportunities for future development. If substance dualism is not the only model of the human person consistent with traditional theology, indeed if it is incompatible with it, then there must be other ways to think about the human person, assuming that traditional theology is true, of course. Likewise, if other models of the human person are consistent with the creedal heritage of the church, then there are more philosophical options available for the Christian to develop.

¹⁷ See Wilkinson who takes a similar approach. However, I have serious disagreements with his work throughout, not limited to the conclusions he arrives at. Wilkinson, *Crowned with Glory and Honor*.

¹⁸ Michael Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 9.

Third, since this is a work of philosophy, my goal is not to make *exclusively* theological judgments. While I do make some judgments, my primary goal is not to render judgments on which positions are orthodox or heretical. I assume for the sake of argument the consensus on these matters. Instead, as a work of the philosophy of *religion*, I intend to examine the coherence of certain theological claims. Therefore, claims by Christian philosophers should be subjected to the same level of philosophical scrutiny as other more standard arguments about mind and body. This does require me to explain theological views, but I make little attempt to defend their veracity. I presuppose them for the sake of argument.

1.4 A Brief Methodological Consideration: Christological Anthropology

It is standard in philosophy to examine the philosophy of mind from non-religious source material and arguments. One is to consider the various philosophical problems and puzzles and determine which view has the least costs and the most benefits. For example, if one is to affirm dualism simpliciter, he or she must understand the interaction problem and the issues it presents. If dualism is to be true, puzzles like the interaction problem cannot cause incoherence or present greater costs than there are benefits for dualism in general. Such a methodological research program is good. However, as noted, my methodological approach is distinct. Instead of considering the human person exclusively through non-religious philosophical categories, I use a Christological anthropology *of sorts* to examine the contours of the philosophy of mind. Therefore, I assume that Christology can “illumine” our understanding of human nature in some way.¹⁹ For example, Alvin Plantinga argues, “considerations from the Christian faith are powerfully relevant to the alleged objections to dualism and arguments for materialism.”²⁰ Plantinga’s point is that we should allow Christian commitments to serve in various positive fashions in our philosophical inquiries. Christian commitments like the resurrection can serve as a defeater to various philosophical views. Any philosophical view that is unable to affirm a resurrection should be rejected by a Christian. Therefore, for my purposes, I assume the truth of what is commonly called Conciliar Christology (which I will define in a later section) and from that basis examine the philosophy of mind. By proceeding in this manner, I am assuming that there are at least *some* metaphysics required by Conciliar dogma.²¹ In this sense, my method is one of Christological anthropology. If a model is unable to make sense of the various desiderata of Conciliar Christology, then it is incompatible with orthodox Christianity. And if something is incompatible with orthodox Christianity, the orthodox Christian will likely consider it false, or at least rather undesirable!

This approach contrasts with three contemporary examples. First, theologian Marc Cortez argues that Christian theology and philosophy ought to begin with a Christological focus to understand *any* area aright. If

¹⁹ Thomas Joseph White, *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 130.

²⁰ Alvin Plantinga, “Materialism and Christian Belief,” in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter Van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 100.

²¹ See Oliver D. Crisp, *The Word Enfleshed: Exploring the Person and Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 80–81.

Jesus is the paradigm type for true humanity, then he is “importantly epistemologically relevant.”²² This doesn’t mean we can’t know anything apart from Christ but that he provides greater clarity. There is confidence of the truth of matters if it attaches to Christology whereas there may be less epistemic justification otherwise. But Christology provides not only greater clarity but also additional insights.²³ In this thin sense, my research program is one of Christological anthropology by beginning with the truth of Conciliar Christology and examining other views in light of it, giving “greater clarity.” However, it does not hinge on providing *additional* insights. Instead, it functions more as a filter, sifting potential problems for the mind and body debates. While it could be used as a tool to expand our knowledge of human nature my goal remains primarily negative. It is to show that, given Christological assumptions, substance dualism is false.

Second, Michael Wilkinson has written a recent monograph entitled *Crowned with Glory and Honor* wherein he argues with a very similar approach as mine for a “Chalcedonian anthropology.” But his program differs in several respects. First, his research methodology is significantly different. He focuses on biblical-theological claims, the ecclesial reception of Chalcedon as biblically faithful, and historical developments (e.g., the Reformed orthodox rightly articulate Chalcedon).²⁴ My aim is chiefly philosophical, examining the coherence of substance dualism and materialism with Conciliar Christology. Second, his expected conclusions are much more expansive than mine. He thinks any Christological anthropology should deliver “paradigm-shifting insights.”²⁵ My goals are far more modest. Third, his taxonomy of views in the philosophy of mind and his characterization of the debate are quite different. He categorizes the philosophy of mind into only two main paradigm groups, substance dualism and materialism whereas I include a third. He also thinks the main distinction between these two models is the number of substances in the constitution of the human, but I reject this notion.²⁶

Third, philosopher Robin Le Poidevin’s recent monograph *And Was Made Man* is a prime example of another similar methodological program.²⁷ Le Poidevin places Christology and the philosophy of mind self-consciously in conversation. He explores what models in the philosophy of mind and philosophy more generally can provide a coherent Christology. This sort of research program is exemplified throughout this thesis. But, unlike Le Poidevin, I do not examine alternative Christologies. Therefore, I do not consider how alternative Christologies might make greater sense of mind and body debates. I have no interest in exploring ways that substance dualism might be consistent with non-traditional Christological models like Kenoticism.

²² Marc Cortez, *Resourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 15.

²³ Cortez, *Resourcing Theological Anthropology*, 20.

²⁴ Wilkinson, *Crowned with Glory and Honor*, 29.

²⁵ Wilkinson, *Crowned with Glory and Honor*, 24.

²⁶ These are not the only disagreements I have with Wilkinson whose work I find problematic on a number of levels. Throughout the work historical and philosophical claims are made that are false or unproven. Wilkinson, *Crowned with Glory and Honor*, 15–16, 18, 24.

²⁷ Robin Le Poidevin, *And Was Made Man: Mind, Metaphysics, and Incarnation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

Instead, I privilege traditional so-called Conciliar Christology. For the sake of argument, I assume its veracity and evaluate within that framework.

I should note that my approach does not require one be committed to the truth of Conciliar Christology or even Christianity more generally. One may find both objectionable and yet find value in my project. This is because, if certain models in the philosophy of mind are inconsistent with views held by a wide array of thinkers from the last several thousand years, there is *some* weight that such models are flawed. The value and virtue of consistency with widely held beliefs is not something everyone shares and the epistemic importance of it is highly debated. But I do not intend to defend its relative importance. Instead, I suggest there is at least *some* value. The Christian not committed to Conciliar Christology will still have some interest in how divine providence has shaped the church over the millennia and will feel pressure to at least understand the various reasons for why beliefs have been held for so long. So, at minimum, they will be compelled to listen before rejecting. The non-Christian may have less reason to listen, of course, since they have no reason to think consistency with a Christian doctrine is important in any sense. But even so, I assume there is value in hearing from the past and that widely held opinions should be given some level of epistemic status, even if very minimal.

1.5 The Philosophy of Mind: Taxonomies and Definitions

There are numerous taxonomies in the philosophy of mind. Most of them overlap to a significant degree and differ over naming conventions or the degree of differences between sub-categories. For my purposes, I follow the consensus and work within two main categories: monism and dualism. Monism is the family of views that say there is only one sort of stuff (or properties, phenomena, insert whatever you like). That “stuff” could be immaterial, like an idealist would argue, or material, like a materialist would argue. Whatever the world is made of, it is one sort of stuff. In contrast, dualism is the family of views that say there are two sorts of stuff. There is immaterial stuff and material stuff and the immaterial stuff is irreducible to material and vice versa.²⁸ For example, my body is a straightforwardly material thing, but my consciousness or mental states are immaterial since they cannot reduce to a material object or property, whether my brain or functions of my brain. They are not merely sophisticated states and processes of a material system. So, the main idea is that a dualist thinks reality is not exhausted by either the material or immaterial.²⁹

For the sake of clarity, it is also helpful to initially elucidate what counts as “immaterial” versus material. There are several ways to parse this distinction. First, some say something being immaterial is about *accessibility* or *privileged* access. If something is immaterial, someone has privileged access to it that others do not. Material

²⁸ Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness*, 19; William Jaworski, *Philosophy of Mind: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 1.

²⁹ Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness*, 3.

stuff, in contrast, lacks this privileged access. Material things are public, and everyone has access to them. They aren't like our personal phenomena, for example. Therefore, a purely immaterial property is one that does not entail the instantiation of a material property.³⁰ Second, others make a simple distinction: the immaterial is mental and the material is corporeal.³¹ Third, others have suggested that what is material is about a certain mode of spatial location. Material objects occupy space in an impenetrable way whereas the immaterial isn't impenetrable.³² This means that something immaterial can still be spatially located but it wouldn't occupy space in the same way that normal material things do. Fourth, Peter van Inwagen has explained that immaterial properties are those "whose distribution or extension in a world does not depend on, is not determined by, does not supervene upon, the way elementary particples are arranged in that world."³³ Fifth, John Duns Scotus (d. 1308) similarly offered a threefold taxonomy for what could be immaterial. Something could be immaterial by (1) not being an operation that involves a corporeal part, (2) not being extended, or (3) is abstracted from the "here and now" and similar conditions that are typical of the material.³⁴ It's not quite clear what Scotus meant by lacking extension but I presume he did not account for unextended simples that are material. Finally, some have simply assumed that there is no way to make sense of an immaterial property.³⁵ I'm sympathetic to the inability to properly make sense of the distinction but I take it in what follows that something is immaterial if it meets the criteria set by van Inwagen. Something is immaterial if it (1) does depend on (2) is not determined by, and/or (3) does not supervene on the way elementary particles are in the world.

As a note, if not already apparent, I make no relevant distinction between the terminology of materialist and physicalist. I treat them as synonymous terms for my purposes, though I choose to use materialist throughout. I use these categories and terms in relation to human persons alone. When I speak of materialism or monism (I mean, *materialist* monism here, in the sense that everything is without remainder dependent on the material), I am speaking with reference to people that we see every day. Therefore, I intend to discuss what I call a *local* thesis of materialism. I am referencing the flesh and blood people that work on Wall Street, eat in the sandwich shop, and drink afternoon tea. I am *not* considering other aspects of our world, whether tigers, statues, or mosquitoes. Whether a mosquito is entirely material has little relevance to the thesis I am exploring about human persons. While someone may wish to argue that global materialism is true, and hence, *everything without remainder* is made of one sort of stuff, in this case material stuff, I see no need to commit

³⁰ Richard Swinburne, "From Mental/Physical Identity to Substance Dualism," in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter Van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 143.

³¹ Crisp, *God Incarnate*, 146.

³² R. T. Mullins, "Physicalist Christology and the Two Sons Worry," in *Christian Physicalism? Philosophical Theological Criticisms*, ed. R. Keith Loftin and Joshua R. Farris (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018), 155.

³³ Peter Van Inwagen, "A Materialist Ontology of the Human Person," in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter Van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 213.

³⁴ John Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings: A Selection*, trans. Allan B. Wolter (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987), 141.

³⁵ Peter van Inwagen, "Dualism and Materialism: Athens and Jerusalem?," *Faith and Philosophy* 12, no. 4 (1995): 476, <https://doi.org/10.5840/faithphil199512444>.

myself to such ontological baggage given my thesis.³⁶ This is especially so since I am exploring the philosophy of *Christianity* wherein traditional commitments already nearly universally require immaterial beings like God and angels. Though, some in the Christian tradition argue that *only* God is truly immaterial and what we call immaterial in the created realm is merely immaterial “in comparison” with material.³⁷ However, it is true that some like Hud Hudson have sought to argue that God is material because something is material if it is literally in space and since God is literally omnipresent he is material.³⁸ But given the need to affirm not only this model of omnipresence (which is no doubt controversial in the tradition itself, with the majority rejecting a literal account of omnipresence) but also the need to affirm a novel way of speaking about material and immaterial things (something Hudson himself admits), especially for the Christian tradition which ubiquitously ascribes immateriality to God, I assume this account is either false from the start or using terms in ways that I find rather unhelpful since they mean something rather different than what most would assume.³⁹ For instance, like I described above, if God is material in the sense of van Inwagen’s definition, then he depends on, is determined by, or supervenes on the way some elementary particles in the world are arranged, which is false on nearly any Christian account. Therefore, on whatever account, global materialism is false from the start. Furthermore, I also leave off on any sustained discussion of idealism given its general lack of philosophical interest over the last century. While there are some revivals of idealism in Christian circles, it is by and large not a majority option.⁴⁰ The criticisms I interact with are almost universally interested in materialism.

1.5.1 Substance Dualism

Under the main categories for mind-body taxonomies, I suggest we should think of three main families of views.⁴¹ First are dualist views that I call *substance dualism*. These are views that are designated by terms like Platonic dualism, Cartesian dualism, and the like. While these views have specific particularities, like Cartesianism being committed to the mind as (at least) non-spatial, instead of categorizing each of these as a distinct subset, when I refer to them without specific definition, I intend to refer to what I consider their main unifying factors: (1) human persons are comprised of two separate substances (e.g., body and soul), (2)

³⁶ Crisp, *God Incarnate*, 137.

³⁷ John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*, trans. Norman Russell (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2022), 26.

³⁸ Hud Hudson, “Omnipresence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, ed. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea (Oxford University Press, 2011), 210–11, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199596539.001.0001>.

³⁹ For some historical descriptions of accounts of omnipresence, see: Ross D. Inman, “Omnipresence and the Location of the Immaterial,” in *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion Volume 8*, ed. Jonathan L. Kvanvig, vol. 1 (Oxford University Press, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198806967.001.0001>.

⁴⁰ For two recent volumes on idealism and Christianity see: Steven B. Cowan and James S. Spiegel, eds., *Idealism and Christian Philosophy*, Idealism and Christianity (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017); Joshua R. Farris and S. Mark Hamilton, eds., *Idealism and Christian Theology*, Idealism and Christianity (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

⁴¹ My taxonomy here broadly follows Jaworski, though it departs from the comments regarding individuals when contrasting substance dualism with a more generic dualism. See: Jaworski, *Philosophy of Mind*, 5.

the soul (or mind, etc.) and the body are not identical or reducible to one another, and (3) this extra substance (the soul) is essential to the person and responsible for (at least) his/her mental life.⁴²

On a substance dualist account, it is not merely that there are two sorts of stuff (properties, phenomena, etc.) that human persons instantiate or are constituted by. For a substance dualist, human persons are comprised of two distinct substances that are not identical or reducible to one another. The immaterial substance is irreducible to the material substance and they are distinct and separate, able to exist apart from one another. The most important aspect of the human person is the immaterial substance (e.g., the soul), where personal identity resides. However, human persons are also suitably related to a second distinct substance, which is the body. The bodily relation is understood variously among substance dualists and I will leave off examining them until a later chapter. Therefore, for the substance dualist, the person just *is* the immaterial substance and exists independently of the material body.

As a representative definition, consider Brandon Rickabaugh and J. P. Moreland who argue that substance dualism is the thesis that the human person is comprised of a substantial immaterial soul and a physical body.⁴³ Substance dualism, therefore, requires that (1) the human person is comprised of soul and body (2) the soul is an immaterial substance (3) the body is a physical entity (4) the human person can exist without body (5) mental life is possessed and unified by the soul, and (6) the soul is fundamental (irreducible).⁴⁴ In other words, human persons are comprised of two different substances, at least in this life while we are alive, and personal identity resides in the immaterial substance, e.g., the soul.

1.5.2 Neo-Aristotelian Dualism

The second broad view of human persons in this taxonomy are dualist views that do not posit a second substance (e.g., human persons are a *single* substance) and hence persons are identical to their soul.⁴⁵ Call this family of views *Neo-Aristotelian dualism*. These could be emergent dualist accounts, hylemorphic accounts, or even non-reductive materialist accounts.⁴⁶ The point for this category is that there *is* immaterial and material stuff and human persons *instantiate* both somehow (e.g., property dualism, at least, is true), *but human persons are a single substance* and are identical to this single substance, composed of whatever it is. In this way, the whole substance and its material parts have a “double dependency.” The whole is dependent on its parts in such a way that it cannot be a separate substance while the parts are dependent on the whole without being

⁴² J. P. Moreland and Scott B. Rae, *Body & Soul: Human Nature & the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 121; Zimmerman, “Three Introductory Questions,” 19.

⁴³ Rickabaugh and Moreland, *The Substance of Consciousness*, 3.

⁴⁴ Rickabaugh and Moreland, *The Substance of Consciousness*, 14.

⁴⁵ This bifurcation is not novel. For example, it is the same distinction made by Eberl throughout his recent monograph. See: Jason T. Eberl, *The Nature of Human Persons: Metaphysics and Bioethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020), 71.

⁴⁶ Christopher Hauser, “Persons, Souls, and Life After Death,” in *Neo-Aristotelian Metaphysics and the Theology of Nature*, ed. William M. R. Simpson, Robert C. Koons, and James Orr (New York, NY: Routledge, 2022), 245.

redundant or epiphenomenal.⁴⁷ It may very well be that the human person is a material being but that their conscious states are immaterial. This counts as a dualistic theory on my rendering.

It is important to keep my definition of Neo-Aristotelian dualism in mind as many do not immediately categorize positions like non-reductive materialism as *dualist*. But I take it that on a non-reductive materialist account there *are* two sorts of stuff. The mental is in some way irreducible to the material and is thus a distinct category of thing. Furthermore, I've chosen to let *property instantiation* be the main determining factor for group membership rather than *constitution*. So, if dualism is a thesis about constitution, then non-reductive materialism is not dualistic because human persons are not made of anything immaterial. However, if dualism is a thesis about what sort of properties exist and are instantiated, then non-reductive materialism *is* a dualistic theory. So, I've chosen to deploy dualism more generally as a category about properties and not constitution strictly given the way the category is usually defined and for the purposes of simplifying the number of models. The other views within this heading (like hylomorphism) will be defined as needed throughout the remainder of the thesis.

1.5.3 Monism

The third and final category is a straightforward reductive monist account. On reductive materialism there is only one sort of stuff—the material. This could be a crude behaviorism or a more popular identity thesis wherein every mental state is identical to a material state. If I experience pain, that pain is identical to a material state in my brain. There is nothing mysterious or immaterial about it. There is no distinction between the two. Everything without remainder is material. Conversely, on reductive immaterialism (or idealism), there is only one sort of stuff—the immaterial. But the same story is true: everything without remainder is one sort of stuff. My consciousness is not different than my arm or leg. They are fundamentally of the same metaphysical category.

⁴⁷ Robert Koons, “Staunch vs. Faint-Hearted Hylomorphism: Toward an Aristotelian Account of Composition,” *Res Philosophica* 91, no. 2 (2014): 164, <https://doi.org/10.11612/resphil.2014.91.2.1>.

2 - DEFINING CONCILIAR CHRISTOLOGY

Given my intention to assume the truth of Conciliar Christology it is necessary to define what I mean by it along with several important technical terms that are deployed throughout the thesis like “person,” “nature,” and “assumption.” For the sake of clarity, I attempt to use a limited terminological toolkit, though this is not always achievable. Therefore, I intentionally avoid introducing the laundry list of technical theological terms that are often ushered and can obscure rather than clarify discussions without the slog of slow definitions.

To speak of Conciliar Christology is to speak of both a theological dogma and a highly sophisticated and developed way of reasoning. Most fundamentally, for my purposes, it refers to the theological dogma found in (at least) the first six great ecumenical councils of the Christian church, the great ecumenical creeds (the Apostles’ Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and the Nicene Creed), and the various methods of reasoning that were employed to both develop and defend the dogmas contained. These councils are generally well known but include Nicaea (325), Constantinople I (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople II (553), and Constantinople III (681). Christian theology has drawn on these historical watersheds for centuries, leaving us with a vast array of highly developed accounts of their dogmas. The theology “found in” these councils include both the creedal formulas but also the approved theological works of those like Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) and Pope Leo (400–461). For my purposes, the more developed Chalcedonian Christology is taken as the starting point for my thesis. Its teachings are assumed to be true for the sake of argument.

2.1 Conciliar Christology: On Orthodoxy

I begin by developing Conciliar Christology without direct recourse to the Nicene Creed. The reason I do not begin with a careful analysis of the very first and most influential ecumenical treatment of Christ is because the Christology found in later councils like Chalcedon is more developed, thus offering a more robust initial definition of what Conciliar Christology means than what is found initially in Nicaea. As such, I assume that Chalcedonian Christology is substantially identical to the earlier ecumenical treatments like those at Nicaea. For example, it differs in no respect from Nicaea except in providing more descriptive details. Whatever is found in Nicaea is found in Chalcedon. The only aspects that are “new” are terminological advances and clarity regarding what is not consistent with Nicene orthodoxy. This approach is consistent with traditional

theological accounts of the “development of doctrine” and is not novel.⁴⁸ Similarly, it is consistent with modern Patristic scholarship on the distinctions between the councils.⁴⁹

This approach is also consistent with the patristic fathers themselves who considered it a crime to doctrinally innovate beyond the Nicene faith.⁵⁰ The Chalcedonian fathers were abundantly clear: “accursed who innovates.”⁵¹ The idea is that Chalcedon, by the logic of the authors, couldn’t innovate beyond Nicaea in any way without committing a serious crime. Therefore, Chalcedon should not substantially add to the claims made at Nicaea. Cyril of Alexandria, touchstone of Chalcedonian orthodoxy, is similarly representative as he argues that it is wrong to go beyond Nicaea even in the slightest respect.⁵² The point is this: starting with and prioritizing Chalcedon doesn’t ignore or relativize Nicaea (or other councils), at least by the lights of the Chalcedonian framers. Their goal was to add nothing and so I assume for the sake of argument that they achieved this goal.

Understanding Chalcedonian Christology naturally begins with the Chalcedonian Definition itself:

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [coessential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.⁵³

⁴⁸See, for example: Vincent of Lerins, “The Commonitory,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. C. A. Heurtley, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Park Ridge: Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, 2017).

⁴⁹ See, for example: Lewis Ayres, *Christological Hellenism: A Melancholy Proposal* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2024); Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁵⁰ Richard Price and Michael Gaddis, trans., *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 1 (Konzil, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 22.

⁵¹ Price and Gaddis, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 1:170.

⁵² Cyril of Alexandria quoted in Price and Gaddis, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 1:182.

⁵³ Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*, vol. 2 (Harper & Row, 1877), 62–63, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds2.iv.i.iii.html>.

From the Chalcedonian definition we can draw several principles for appropriately understanding and applying Conciliar Christology throughout this thesis. The definition itself includes a lot of metaphysical machinery underneath the surface. There is talk of souls, bodies, being “consubstantial,” natures, and so on. All are important metaphysical concepts that are often greatly contested in contemporary debates. So, it is worthwhile to examine each important claim, and the definitions of the key terms, to determine what are the primary principles that will be used to adjudicate debates.

2.1.1 Conciliar Natures

The concept of “nature” is foundational for Conciliar Christology since the other important Christological concepts generally depend on this term to be properly understood. As such, much of my thesis relies on understanding the various senses of nature which is regularly said in “many ways.” These “many ways” are often unfortunately left undefined in most contemporary literature because theologians have thought the matter apparently too obvious to state.⁵⁴ This is also true with the Chalcedonian definition which deploys the concept but assumes a prior understanding. For example, according to the Chalcedonian definition Jesus is “perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man.” The concept of a nature is intended to capture the terminology of “Godhead” and “manhood” of which Chalcedon requires Jesus to be “truly” both. As it states, he is “to be acknowledged in two natures” with “the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence.” But nowhere are we given a definition of what a nature is. So, in what follows I provide the most generic sense of nature before examining two more specific concepts of nature that are often deployed in the Christological literature. I argue that one model of nature is more appropriate for metaphysical theorizing that is committed to a broadly Chalcedonian Christology.

2.1.2 Natures as Natural Kinds

Given the Chalcedonian framework, at minimum, a “nature” is the generic term for what the contemporary philosophical literature calls natural kinds (e.g., there is a kind “God” and “man”).⁵⁵ Natural kinds are classifications or categories that correspond to the objective “joints” in nature.⁵⁶ They form a general taxonomy from which we can group various objects as “like” one another. They describe members that resemble one another in respect of *what* they are and not merely *how* they are. Natural kinds refer to things like humans, animals, and bodies and not white things, blue things, or round things.⁵⁷ These taxonomies

⁵⁴ See Gorman who even admits that there is no clear and detailed account of nature in even Thomas Aquinas! Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 19.

⁵⁵ See Crisp who calls them “substance-kinds” in the sense of an Aristotelian secondary substance. Crisp, *The Word Enfleshed*, 87.

⁵⁶ Alyssa Ney, *Metaphysics: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2023), 137, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351141208>.

⁵⁷ Jeffrey E. Brower, “Aquinas on the Problem of Universals,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 92, no. 3 (May 2016): 718, <https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12176>.

correspond to nature in that they reflect what is natural and not merely what is grouped by the human intellect. These are often deeply intuitive generalizations. As such, natural kinds are more privileged than other categories.

Given the methodological approach of my thesis, one may wonder if all (orthodox) Christians are committed to a metaphysic including natural kinds. That would be a substantial commitment given that there are many contemporary metaphysical accounts according to which natural kinds are not fundamental (e.g., all broadly Humean ones). Thus, someone might wonder whether we're already reading too much metaphysics into the doctrine: couldn't the language of "natures" simply be a way to refer to something less metaphysically robust? For example, that Christ has certain properties that are typically had by humans and typically had by God? Maybe so. But given the language used that there are distinct sets of properties "of each nature," and the exposition of what natures are by the Christian tradition, it appears hard to allow for broadly Humean approaches without significant revision to the more naturally fitting natural kinds approach.⁵⁸ At the very least, we need an account according to which there is objectively and mind independently something it is to be a human being. This must carve nature at the joints independently of our classification schemes and interests. So, we cannot have an account according to which the class of human beings is just composed of things that have a pure family resemblance that, given our classification interests, make sense to group together and put a label on it, but there isn't really anything deep at the level of reality itself in virtue of which they are objectively members of the same natural kind. Therefore, I assume that alternative accounts of natural kinds are not part of Conciliar Christology, though it is reasonable to think that one could argue to the contrary if they found sufficient historical evidence and made sufficient theological explanation.

The traditional way to classify natural kinds is by "essences."⁵⁹ An essence is a set of features that make something the kind of thing that it is.⁶⁰ The "make it that kind of thing" language is intended to refer to those things which are explanatorily basic or "fundamental" features of an object. For example, for a human person, rationality is explanatorily basic compared to the capacity for grammar since rationality explains the capacity of grammar.⁶¹ It is not the other way around. Human persons are not rational in virtue of our grammatical skills but we are grammatical in virtue of our rational capacities. This explanation relation is true even for other things like Chat-GPT which does not have the capacity for grammar as a fundamental feature but in virtue of large complex computational structures. And so if we look at the world, we wouldn't carve up a human essence according to the capacity for grammar but more fundamentally based on those with the capacity for rationality since rationality is what explains the capacity for grammar. Essences, also, are a set of

⁵⁸ See for example: John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*, 47.

⁵⁹ "Nature" is sometimes used in place of essence but to avoid confusion I reserve the terminology of nature for natural kinds.

⁶⁰ Ney, *Metaphysics*, 139.

⁶¹ Anna Marmodoro and Erasmus Mayr, *Metaphysics: An Introduction to Contemporary Debates and Their History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 93–95.

essential properties. So, they do not reflect aspects such as being married or being snub-nosed which could be lost without losing the fundamental character of a thing.⁶² These sort of non-fundamental features are explained by other features of the thing, which make them non-fundamental.⁶³ For example, if Donald Trump were to become a politician, this would not alter his fundamental character. It would be explained by something about Trump himself. While politician is a kind, it is not a natural kind. But if he were to become a reptile with a cold-blooded system, his fundamental character would be altered. His very existence would be changed. These fundamental aspects are constitutive of *what* a thing is rather than merely characterizations of *how* a thing is.⁶⁴ They pick out things as *these* sorts and not *those* sorts.

Take another example. Humans are a natural kind. “Human” includes a wide range of individuals from Barack Obama to Donald Trump to Winston Churchill. They are all members of the kind “human” because they share the human essence. Similarly, polar bear is a natural kind since it carves nature at its joints. Grizzly bears, black bears, and lions, or tigers are not members of the natural kind polar bear because they lack the essence of what it is to be a polar bear. They are not white bears that thrive in freezing climates. Non-natural kinds, in contrast, are imposed from without. For example, when I look to purchase a pickup truck and search for only those within a specific price range, this is a non-natural kind. This range, or category, is artificial and not naturally occurring or discoverable. It only reflects my current interests or needs. Whereas the natural kind human of Tyrannosaurus Rex is naturally occurring and discoverable. Their reality exhibits naturally specifiable joints that are intelligible and epistemically justified.⁶⁵

Therefore, natures on a broadly Chalcedonian framework refer to natural kinds which, at minimum, are kinds grouped by reference to a thing’s essence which is its fundamental character or “whatness.”⁶⁶ These are understood as a unique, unanalyzable, and irreducibly unified ways of being.⁶⁷ For example again, humans are traditionally classified as having the essence “rational animal.” Dogs are canines with four legs that bark., etc. The term “nature”, then, is a term whereby, in virtue of instantiating whatever properties are necessary and sufficient for it, an object can be classified as the *kind* of object that it is. As Aristotle argues, natures are not a “this” but a “such.”⁶⁸ So, natures capture the reasons why I am a human and not a crocodile. I am human in virtue of instantiating certain properties such as rationality whereas I am not a crocodile since I don’t instantiate the properties of a reptile, etc.

⁶² Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 20.

⁶³ See Michael Gorman, “The Essential and The Accidental,” *Ratio* XVIII, no. 3 (September 2005): 284–85.

⁶⁴ Ross D. Inman, *Substance and the Fundamentality of the Familiar: A Neo-Aristotelian Mereology* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 27.

⁶⁵ Inman, *Substance and the Fundamentality of the Familiar: A Neo-Aristotelian Mereology*, 21.

⁶⁶ Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology*, Second edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 227.

⁶⁷ Michael J. Loux and Thomas M. Crisp, *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*, Fourth edition (New York: Routledge, 2017), 111.

⁶⁸ Aristotle, *Metaphysics: Zeta, Eta, Theta, Iota. Books VII-X*, trans. Montgomery Furth (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1985), 33b19.

2.1.3 Two Models of Nature

It has additionally become standard in theological circles to talk of natures as either “abstract” or “concrete.”⁶⁹ While these terms can lack clarity at times, they occur throughout the Christological literature that plays an important role in this thesis. Therefore, it is necessary to recount some of the basic contours of the distinction and to map exactly where my approach fits. Below are the ways Tim Pawl defines each in his 2016 work:

Abstract Nature: x is an abstract nature of some type, y , if and only if x is a property or complex of properties the instantiation of which by a thing is necessary and sufficient for that thing’s being a y .

Concrete Nature: x is a concrete nature of some type, y , if and only if x is an individual instance of y , and y is an infima species.⁷⁰

I should note that the additional technical jargon of infima species corresponds with my natural kind and essence talk of “fundamental”, etc. “Infima species” is added to be clear that in the case of Jesus, he has only two natures and no more. Infima is designed to indicate a “lowest level type” so that other abstract natures do not count as viable substitutions for y in this definition. Infima species, then, is not any old kind. It is a special kind because the facts used to classify the kind are the “lowest level down.”⁷¹ For instance, Conciliar Christology wouldn’t want for the x (let’s say Jesus) to have multiple “lowest level down” types like some kind y (let’s say mammal) since this would entail that Jesus is *also* of some kind z (let’s say human) which would result in more than two natures in the incarnation. He would have a divine nature, a human nature, a mammal nature, and so on. Instead, only one of these is the “infima species” or fundamental kind. Naturally, one can simply say that the higher-level types are sets of the lower-level types or reduce to them in some way but for the sake of clarity its useful to include the technical jargon here.⁷²

Based on Pawl’s general definition, which is rather representative, I take it that what makes the concrete nature view distinct is that it adds the additional claim that this property or complex of properties cannot be understood as separate from the individual instance that instantiates them. So, wherever there is a complex of properties that would indicate a thing x having a nature of kind y there is an *individual instance* of it. There is no nature—whether it be mammal, human, or tree—that exists as a property or a set (I am speaking strictly of organisms and not non-organic material) in a purely abstract way apart from an individual instance of it in reality. There is no possible world wherein this complex of properties could jointly be instantiated in ways that otherwise would be an individual instance of human, tree, or mammal, without such a nature having a

⁶⁹ See for example: Oliver D. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 41–46.

⁷⁰ Tim Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology: A Philosophical Essay* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 35–36.

⁷¹ See for example: Loux and Crisp, *Metaphysics*, 111–12.

⁷² Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology*, 36–37.

reality.⁷³ The reason for this is that there must be an *explanation* for why these properties are systematically unified in substances of each kind in the same way.⁷⁴ Apart from the individual instance as a unified whole there is no truthmaker for claims like “Jesus is a human.” The truthmaker that settles something’s location on the porphyrian tree (e.g., for a human, an animal that is rational) is inseparable from an individual instance. I take it, like Pawl, that the concrete nature is the standard usage among those committed to the veracity of Conciliar Christology and will use it as what nature means henceforth unless otherwise noted.⁷⁵ It is further well documented as the traditional model for the medieval and Reformation period.⁷⁶

The abstract versus concrete distinction is helpfully mapped onto the general metaphysics of concrete particulars and their attributes (this is not to say this is the *only* way to understand it, but it is *a* helpful way). Michael Loux and Thomas Crisp offer three main approaches to this question with the substratum theory, bundle theory, and substance theory. For the substratum theory, there is a bare particular that is the exemplifier of properties. For something to be a nature or kind on this view is to exemplify a property or complex of properties. For the bundle theory ordinary particulars are constituted by their properties—there is no substratum—there is just a bundle of properties and nothing more.⁷⁷ Like the substratum theory, to have a nature or kind is to exemplify a property or set of properties. Therefore, the so-called abstract nature view seems to fit well with these accounts. Natures or natural kinds then just are properties. There is no further analysis to be had.

But on the substance theory (traditionally labeled Aristotelian), in contrast to substratum and bundle theories, while concrete particulars are constituted by the universals they exemplify, not all properties are equally important in describing each concrete particular. Substance theorists suggest that things cannot be reduced to or exhaustively analyzed by their properties alone. There are distinct categories that define what a thing is besides the properties it exemplifies.⁷⁸ These are categories like natural kinds such as human being. These distinct categories explain why natures/kinds are not just properties for the substance theory. On this account particulars that belong to a kind have properties in virtue of the kind but a thing belonging to a kind cannot be reduced to or analyzed in terms of possessing properties. It is *because* it belongs to the kind, with a certain essence, that it has certain properties and not the other way around.⁷⁹ The kinds to which concrete particulars belong represent “irreducibly unified ways of being.”⁸⁰ In virtue of belonging to the kind the concrete object

⁷³ Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology*, 36.

⁷⁴ Inman, *Substance and the Fundamentality of the Familiar: A Neo-Aristotelian Mereology*, 30.

⁷⁵ Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology*, 39–47.

⁷⁶ Richard Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6; Marilyn McCord Adams and Richard Cross, “Aristotelian Substance and Supposits,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 79 (2005): 26.

⁷⁷ Loux and Crisp, *Metaphysics*, 82.

⁷⁸ Loux and Crisp, *Metaphysics*, 106.

⁷⁹ Loux and Crisp, *Metaphysics*, 107.

⁸⁰ Loux and Crisp, *Metaphysics*, 108.

exhibits these irreducibly unified forms of being.⁸¹ Loux and Crisp call these natures/kinds “individuating universals” that are like “cookie cutters.” The kind, as a cookie cutter, goes around the universe creating concrete particulars that are their instances. So, for example, the kind “human nature” creates concrete instance of human persons.⁸² And so, on this metaphysical story which aligns with the concrete nature view, natures are not properties but individual instances that have certain essences which exemplify the properties which we use to classify as a certain kind. They really and truly are most fundamentally concrete particulars and not properties.⁸³ This isn’t to say that substance theory requires a belief in natural kinds or essences but that it is more natural and common than the bundle or substratum theory. If there are essences or natural kinds on these other stories, they are metaphysically far more robust, in the sense that they typically must include *all* the properties of a concrete particular instead of a smaller set which explains the other properties of the particular. For a substance theorist, concrete particulars can exemplify a great number of additional properties that merely modify or characterize it without describing what it *is*.

2.2 Conciliar Persons

The next important term to understand comes from the claim that Jesus is “one and the same Son.” The term “same” is repeated throughout the definition in various ways, ensuring that the Son is “not parted or divided into two persons.” Therefore, the key principle is that Jesus is *one* person. Any metaphysical scheme that defines the Son as two persons or potentially generates two persons from the incarnation event is, by definition, anti-Chalcedonian. Given this requirement, I explore the “Two Sons Worry” in chapter five.

But to understand what it means for Jesus to be one person we must understand what is meant by the language of “person.” Oftentimes, in much theological literature, personhood is vaguely defined in terms like “mode of existence.”⁸⁴ But the term in a Chalcedonian framework is not purely existential. It is not designed to focus on psychology such as emotions or feelings of personal worth like many contemporary thinkers use it. Nor is it a term designed to simply pick out consciousness. Instead, it is primarily concerned with ontology. This is not to say that other aspects cannot be included in the definition of person. Rather, it is to say that they are not sufficient for it.⁸⁵

Persons, for Conciliar theology, most often are explained with various technical terms that are standard fare for medieval contexts but rather obtuse for contemporary ones. The most important term is typically

⁸¹ Loux and Crisp, *Metaphysics*, 109.

⁸² Loux and Crisp, *Metaphysics*, 110. It is important to note that the “cookie cutter” analogy only works well for material objects and not so much for immaterial objects, whether angels or God.

⁸³ Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, 46.

⁸⁴ Robert Spaemann, *Persons: The Difference between “Someone” and “Something,”* trans. Oliver O’Donovan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 30–31.

⁸⁵ Demetrios Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 104.

“subsistence.” It is ubiquitous to find definitions of persons as things that “subsist” independently.⁸⁶ In other words, they are substances and not merely “accidents.” For example, Clifford the big red dog is red. But the color red does not subsist because it inheres in Clifford and thus depends on him. It lacks metaphysical priority. Whereas Clifford “subsists” since he is the subject of characteristics or properties. This subsistence theory is metaphysically loaded to an extent, with some assumptions, as one can see from the previous discussion on substance, substratum, and bundle theories. Based on this account of subsistence, bundle theories seem to be ruled out from the start based on their metaphysical account of properties having some level of metaphysical priority for determining the substance. In other words, without the properties a concrete particular has, there is no “subsistence.”

Therefore, I take it that “independent subsistence” is a stand in for what is also commonly called “supposit” or “hypostasis” in the theological literature. This is similar to the Aristotelian concept of primary substance but is introduced to aid with Trinitarian and incarnational quandaries like having three persons in one substance or one person with two natures. So, in the case of the incarnation, the human nature is supposed to be a substance *but not subsistence or suppositum* since it depends on something else.⁸⁷ However, I’ve sought to consolidate this technical jargon for the sake of clarity and expediency throughout this thesis as best I can and thus refrain from referencing subsistence’s or suppositum’s unless necessary (though it is necessary at times!).

But persons are more than simply independent subsistences. Lions and tigers meet this criterion and are not traditionally considered *persons*. Therefore, on the Chalcedonian framework, persons are also *rational*. They have intellects that are self-reflexive, deliberative, contemplative and distinct from the consciousness of animals that act on pure instinct. No animal writes a textbook on metaphysics. No animal discovers the general theory of relativity and then teaches it to others. Of course, not many persons do either! But it is in principle possible for every person. These are traits only available to those with a rational nature which is beyond mere vegetative states of self-maintenance or sensible traits like taste and smell. Therefore, a standard definition of person could be as follows:

x is a person $\equiv_{\text{def}}$ x is an independent subsistence of a rational nature

Therefore, persons cannot be exhaustively defined by recourse to biological or psychological concepts.⁸⁸ The modern traits predicated of persons (e.g., first person perspective, beliefs, etc.) are not explicitly included in this definition. If one thinks they *should* be explicitly included in the definition, they are welcome to include them here but for the sake of argument I use the more traditional definition.

⁸⁶ For example: Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 343; Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 16.

⁸⁷ Alfred J. Freddoso, “Human Nature, Potency and the Incarnation,” *Faith and Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (1986): 28–29, <https://doi.org/10.5840/faithphil1986312>.

⁸⁸ Spaemann, *Persons*, 23; Roger Scruton, *On Human Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 30.

Therefore, the Chalcedonian definition makes clear that there are only two natures in Jesus and they do not fuse together to generate a new third nature. The natures are “inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably” united and “concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son.” So, Jesus is one person with *two* natures that are united in his singular person. Thus, by Chalcedonian logic, the hypostatic union (e.g., the union of the two natures, divine and human, in one person, God the Son) does not generate a “third thing.” The unity of natures in the Son is in the person and *not* the nature which is because the human nature is supposed to lack the status of “independent subsistence” which requires it to depend on the Son for its existence.⁸⁹ Therefore, the incarnation is not designed to create two persons, each with a single nature, nor does it fuse two mutually exclusive natures together to form a new single nature in the Son in the incarnation. Instead, by Chalcedonian standards there are two natures, without confusion, change, division, or separation. Any metaphysical scheme that would confuse, change, or separate the natures and generate two persons is anti-Chalcedonian. Of course, we have no other examples of something having two “natures.” Everything else in the world, by our understanding of natural kinds, has just one. To have two would naturally seem to give rise to a second substance. This is why we will discuss the problem of two natures and two persons in chapter five.

2.3 Conciliar Souls

The third important claim is that Jesus is “of a rational soul and body.” This is the same claim we find in other ecumenical treatments like the Athanasian Creed. The important terms here relate to soul and body wherein the body is understood as, *at least*, a material organism. It is the bundle of atoms that walked the earth for over thirty years, dined with tax collectors, touched lepers and healed them, died on a Roman cross, rose from the grave, and so on. The concept of a reasonable or rational soul, *in addition* to having a material body, is the important one to further define for the purposes of this thesis.

The background motivation for this additional phrase (reasonable or rational soul) to the definition is the heresy of Apollinarianism, which rejected that Jesus had a human mind.⁹⁰ For Apollinaris, the divine Word took the place of the normal human mind of Christ.⁹¹ There was no need for anything further besides a material body for the Son to become incarnate since the divine Word already had all that a human mind has (e.g., mental states and the like), except in greater detail.⁹² The reaction to Apollinaris’ teaching was that such a view of Christ meant his human nature wasn’t fully human. It wasn’t a human nature at all. Jesus needed a *full* human nature (i.e., he needed to be “perfect in manhood” and “in all things like us”) which required that he have a human soul in addition to his body since the rest of humanity is constituted in such a way. The reason

⁸⁹ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, Revised Edition (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1990), 293.

⁹⁰ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 289.

⁹¹ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 292; Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 307.

⁹² For a contemporary example advocating for an Apollinarian view, see J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 606–10.

he needed to be like us in all things is motivated largely by soteriology. Without a human nature, his salvific mission couldn't be accomplished. The classic maxim of "what is unassumed is unhealed" is frequently invoked here to justify the need. Apart from the divine Son assuming our human nature and living a life of perfect obedience and dying a sacrificial death on our behalf, no salvation could be achieved for human persons.

But if Christ needs a rational soul this seems incompatible with materialistic monism, some versions of dualism such as non-reductive materialism, and potentially hylemorphism. The reason for this is because materialist accounts do not have "souls"—even if non-reductive accounts have what fulfills the function of a soul akin to other accounts like substance dualism. Hylemorphism, likewise, on some renditions does not have a substantially independent soul that exists with its own set of rational powers by itself. If this is the case, then much of my thesis is either significantly hampered or altogether false when I attempt to make constructive cases for materialism. But our accounts of human nature today cannot simply appropriate wholesale any historical notion of the soul, whether Platonic or otherwise.⁹³ Therefore, I suggest that it is wrong to immediately outlaw models besides substance dualism and I argue to this effect below.

2.3.1 Meaning, Traditional Interpretations, and the Nature of Doctrinal Consensus

At this point it is necessary to provide an explanation for why it is (or isn't) legitimate to allow for "non-traditional" uses of terms like "soul" when the framers of the Chalcedonian definition are often understood to universally have a Platonic sort of substance dualism in mind. If my project is supposed to take Conciliar Christology as defined by councils like Chalcedon as necessary, then there needs to be an account for why it is acceptable to reject Platonic styled substance dualism. Not only does my account assume it as necessary but it adjudicates disputes by recourse to traditional interpretations of Conciliar Christology. Therefore, there is significant pressure to give careful reasoning for any non-traditional interpretations. If I allow it in one case, why not others? Given that I *do* argue that there is flexibility on what "soul" means, I provide three reasons that attempt to justify when we can allow for apparent non-traditional interpretations.

Before providing these three reasons, it is important to be clear on the concept of traditional interpretations or meanings. True interpretations are produced by properly functioning communicative faculties that are attentive to all the relevant facts of both the texts themselves, the authors, and the communities of understanding.⁹⁴ As revered theologian Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984) explains:

⁹³ Joseph K. Gordon, *Divine Scripture in Human Understanding: A Systematic Theology of the Christian Bible*, Reading the Scriptures (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), 120.

⁹⁴ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 205.

Common meaning is actual inasmuch as there are common judgments, areas in which all affirm and deny in the same manner; and one withdraws from that common judgment when one disagrees, when one considers true what others hold false and false what they think true.⁹⁵

What Lonergan says here is a standard account of what I mean for a traditional interpretation. What is traditional is the “common judgment” of the community, in this case, the church. The “community coheres or divides, begins or ends, just where the common field of experience, common understanding, common judgment, common commitments begin and end.”⁹⁶ The point here is that there must be a *common* understanding of a concept or term. The object and words should be understood according to the community’s understanding. Therefore, something is a true interpretation so long as it corresponds with the reality of the community’s understanding. This means that there is a distinction between individuals and communities with the community as the standard for judging what is true and false. An interpretation of anything in the ecumenical councils is therefore true in virtue of its relation to the councils understanding and the communal understanding of the Christian church through time and space. Therefore, meaning is not so much the words and texts themselves but what the authors meant. The signs themselves written down are the medium of the persons uttering that fundamentally *mean* something.⁹⁷ This means that the locus of meaning and communal understanding is not in semiotics (signs) but semantics (sentences).⁹⁸ I take it that this initial description is non-controversial, but I will develop the idea further below. The arguments I produce now will build upon this initial concept.

First, I take it that affirming the Chalcedonian definition (and likewise, other creeds or dogmatic documents) requires that one affirm *something* that is relevant to the definition, but it need not include *everything* the original framers had in their minds. This “something” must at least include the general concepts like rational souls, natures, persons and the like. There must be something that corresponds to the council’s terms and meanings for these ideas. We are not free to eliminate these ideas from our metaphysical toolkits or replace them with ideas completely contrary. For example, it would be wrong to say that while the council says Jesus had a rational soul and body, he really was a vegetative plant. However, there is no need to maintain everything the framers had in mind. If they thought bodies were made of a strange otherworldly particle, it is not necessary to similarly believe that so long as the interpretive community of the church lacks a common judgment regarding it. It is sufficient to say that Jesus had a *body* since the common judgment is about having the flesh and blood material body that walked the earth and not about what physically constituted each aspect. I take it that this is an innocuous clarification for those concerned about maintaining a traditional understanding of the conciliar councils since it does not empty the truth of the common judgment of the council. As such I

⁹⁵ Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 79.

⁹⁶ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 79.

⁹⁷ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 202.

⁹⁸ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 204.

argue that what Sarah Coakley calls a grammatical or linguistic framework of the definition or creedal formula is a *necessary* condition, though I argue it is not *sufficient*.⁹⁹

Since the Chalcedonian definition says Christ has a rational soul, we should require talk of souls for any orthodox Christology. But the sufficiency conditions do not include every metaphysical detail that could be had. Therefore, anyone who would flatly reject one of the standard claims (e.g., Jesus is “of a rational soul and body” is *false* with no caveats) is straightforwardly rejecting Chalcedon and by extension Conciliar Christology. However, if one seeks to modify the traditional meaning of a claim like “of a rational soul and body” while maintaining the terminology, the grammatical formulas alone are still insufficient to determine whether one’s belief is consistent with councils like Chalcedon. We must understand what the common judgment of the council was to determine if such revisions are within the bounds of an acceptable rendition of conciliar dogma. Thus, it is insufficient to merely maintain the language of the term soul if the doctrine is emptied of all its meaning. But it seems appropriate to allow for various senses within a set of options. Of course, determining where these limits are is of much debate.

Borrowing for a moment from contemporary debates in political philosophy over “public reason” one could offer further clarity about the necessary and sufficient conditions for “following” Chalcedon and Conciliar Christology in general. On accounts of public reason, for a principle (P) to meet the test of public reason the reasons or arguments that justify P by various groups must be shared in some sense. Typically, there are three main views of justification: strong consensus views, weak consensus views, and convergence views. For our purposes, I outline only the two consensus views. On the strong consensus view, the reasons that justify P must be shared by all members. So, if there is a view in Conciliar Christology, say the divinity of the Christ, every member of the council must accept it on the exact same basis. One cannot affirm the divinity of Christ on different grounds. But on the weak consensus view, the reasons that justify P do not require the same justification but must be based on shared or public reasons. So, in this sense, the council members could differ over their justification for the divinity of Christ. One group may affirm it based on a set of biblical texts, another may affirm it based on a set of philosophical arguments, and another may affirm it based on existential feelings. As long these reasons are accepted as valid normative reasons from the council and provide a reasonable basis for the divinity of Christ, they meet the test of public reason.¹⁰⁰ As such, I take it that it is *not* necessary to follow a strong consensus view for affirming Chalcedon and Conciliar Christology.

Even on a weak consensus view there remain necessary conditions that a view must meet to be considered “consensus,” or a “common judgment” as Lonergan would say. For example, if there are significant variations within the tradition of Christian thought on how to understand something like souls, or say, the

⁹⁹ Portions of this section are derived from my forthcoming monograph, *Classical Theism: A Christian Introduction* (Lexham Press).

¹⁰⁰ Jonathan Quong, “Public Reason,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2022, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/public-reason/>>.

divine attributes, then there ought to be some level of flexibility in what is necessary for Conciliar Christology. These things wouldn't really count as part of a weak consensus if there was serious discrepancy. This doesn't mean that there is unlimited flexibility. If there remains a consensus on two to three similar options, that is a relevant determination for what is a "consensus." But if there is a consensus on what a view is *specifically*, then it is wrong to classify deviations as Conciliar Christology. While one's epistemic justifications for the view can vary, the view itself can't. But what a "consensus" of this sort entails is ambiguous (and likely appears like a lot of work to determine—enough to fill a thesis of its own!). Does it refer to a specific group consensus? All Christians? All theologians? All Bishops present at Chalcedon? Do Arians or Nestorians get to count? What about Unitarians? Is this setting us up for a No-True-Scotsman fallacy where avoiding doctrinal requirements is as simple as saying a council or confession erred and isn't really "consensus?" What is the threshold to meet a "consensus"? Must it require every member of a particular group without exception to be counted as a consensus?

The waters of doctrinal interpretation are obviously difficult and there are connections elsewhere, e.g., to scriptural interpretation, with their own set of massive literatures. Given the goal of my thesis I do not have the ability to sufficiently cover all this material. My thesis, as noted previously, is not primarily a theological treatise, after all. However, I attempt to provide a general framework that is very common in the tradition to serve as a starting point for how "consensus" will be understood in *this* thesis. I suggest that we should adapt the general framework of Vincent of Lérins (d. c. 445) for understanding a consensus. Vincent similarly attempts to provide a sort of "rule" that could distinguish between truth and falsity about matters of Christian doctrine.¹⁰¹ The simplest solution for doctrinal disputes would be to rely on Scripture alone as sufficient for all matters of interpretation but Vincent worries that "all do not accept it in one and the same sense, but one understands its words in one way, another in another; so that it seems to be capable of as many interpretations as there are interpreters."¹⁰² All of the "heretics" of the past that run afoul of Conciliar Christology like Sabellius, Arius, and Nestorius similarly interpret Scripture as their own authority. Therefore, the question of what the *content* of catholic teaching is remains unsettled. Arius and Nestorius can both speak of Jesus with the terminology found in Scripture.

Therefore, besides Scripture Vincent provides his classic definition of true theological beliefs: they must be believed "everywhere, always, by all" which means they must have "universality, antiquity, and consent."¹⁰³ There has been debate over this definition as it seems rather impossible since nearly no belief meets all three of these criteria.¹⁰⁴ However, his definition of the term consent provides great use for developing a theory of consensus. He explains that "in antiquity itself we adhere to the consentient definitions and determinations of

¹⁰¹ Vincent of Lérins, "The Commonitory," 2.4.

¹⁰² Vincent of Lérins, "The Commonitory," 2.5.

¹⁰³ Vincent of Lérins, "The Commonitory," 2.6.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas G. Guarino, *Vincent of Lérins and the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 2.

all, or at the least of almost all priests and doctors.”¹⁰⁵ The key here is the deference to a true consensus in number but also a consensus in authoritative interpreters. Therefore, a Vincent inspired account will locate the concept of a Christian consensus in terms of several “authorities.” First, ecumenical councils are gatherings of the whole church that have received support across time and culture. Anything with the explicit support of a council is a consensus view. If they define a doctrine in greater detail than Scripture, their articulation is to be understood as the consensus. For instance, when they describe Jesus as “homooousios” (of the same essence) with the Father we should take that as the proper theological understanding even if the Bible doesn’t use this term. Second, when we do not have a council, Vincent encourages us to look to the numerous important theological masters who remain within the church as guides where there is a consensus amongst them.¹⁰⁶ So where there is not clarity within a council one may look to individuals or groups for various interpretations to define a consensus. As an example, the doctrine of divine simplicity in its medieval form does not feature explicitly in any council. One, therefore, may reasonably look to the consensus of the Christian tradition and its varied theological masters for greater insight into how one might understand this doctrine. When one begins to uncover the variances to the doctrine, one will find some degree of latitude as not all of the theological “masters” have a strict consensus. Even the greatest of the medieval schoolmen like Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) and John Duns Scotus (d. 1308) have variances in how they cash the doctrine out, despite a strong agreement on the core of the doctrinal claim.¹⁰⁷

To flesh this idea out more, Sarah Coakley’s seminal essay from twenty years ago provides insight with reference to Chalcedon. Coakley offers four models of understanding the meaning and function of the creeds, including the Chalcedonian definition: (1) literal regulation, (2) linguistic regulation, (3) apophatic regulation, and (4) metaphorical regulation. The strictest option, literal regulation, includes *everything* that could be included as necessary for creedal affirmation. It includes all the ontological baggage.¹⁰⁸ Whatever the framers of the creeds believed at the time ought to be believed. Whatever justifications the framers had for the various views must be believed. This is the model I suggest is false. There is no reason to assume that to believe the Chalcedonian definition is true one must then believe *everything* that the framers themselves believed. In other words, there is no need to have a “strong consensus” view. For example, one needn’t have a geocentric view of the universe. Jettisoning this metaphysical assumption does nothing to the definition itself. If true (which I take to be obviously true), an orthodox Christian can replace at least *some* of the metaphysical beliefs that the framers had with an alternative metaphysic and continue to affirm the spirit of

¹⁰⁵ Vincent of Lerins, “The Commonitory,” 2.6.

¹⁰⁶ Vincent of Lerins, “The Commonitory,” 3.8; 27.70; 29.76-78.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example: Mark K. Spencer, “The Flexibility of Divine Simplicity: Aquinas, Scotus, Palamas,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2017): 123–39, <https://doi.org/10.5840/ipq201731682>.

¹⁰⁸ Sarah Coakley, “What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not? Some Reflections on the Status and Meaning of the Chalcedonian ‘Definition,’” in *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O’Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 144.

the definition. Closer to the theology and metaphysics of the definition, I take it that there are various Trinitarian models that can equally make sense of the Chalcedonian definition. One could affirm a strong Latin Trinitarianism or a Monarchian Trinitarianism and confess what the definition seeks to canonize. Whether these models are equally metaphysically plausible is a different question than the one I am seeking to address, which is about the ability to provide a legitimate truthmaker for the propositions.

The second option, linguistic regulation, is a grammatical framework approach. It requires those who seek to confess the creeds to utilize its grammatical terminology in all formulations but allows ambiguity as to the metaphysical underworking. In other words, the only requirement is to use the same terms found in the creeds or conciliar declarations. There is no real mechanism for denying any metaphysical explanation for the terms. One can then understand souls in whatever contemporary sense they desire so long as they retain the general language of soul and body. Instead of offering a metaphysical blueprint this model offers a paradigm or pattern of predication.¹⁰⁹ Those who seek to affirm the creeds must confess in the same pattern as they do and cannot deviate. They must use the same terms. They must say that Jesus is of a reasonable soul and body though they may understand both of those terms to amount to very different things than the patristic fathers.

There is good reason to believe the framers of Chalcedon themselves would have adhered to a linguistic regulatory version of creedalism, which is similar to a “weak consensus” view, since the bishops were wary of adding anything to Nicaea. The goal was to reaffirm and provide a “regulatory grid” for interpretation.¹¹⁰ But Conciliar Christology naturally looks to the luminaries of times past like Athanasius (296/98–373) who at the Council of Alexandria (362) issued a letter that forbids those who “pretend to cite the faith confessed at Nicaea” but “do nothing more than in words deny the Arian heresy while they retain it in thought.”¹¹¹ The idea here is that language alone is insufficient. There must be a meaning alongside the language for one to affirm Conciliar Christology. This same rationale was brought to the fore with Nestorius who was condemned and yet regularly used the approved language of one person.¹¹² And yet the conciliar creeds demonstrate an attitude and style that is willing to tolerate a significant number of differences “in the service of an irenic ecumenism.”¹¹³

The third option, apophatic regulation, is Coakley’s preferred model, as she thinks it is impossible to separate the linguistic from the ontological in the way that the second option attempts to do.¹¹⁴ Language refers to reality.¹¹⁵ Therefore, the apophatic model argues that the creedal formulas are *more* than mere grammatical

¹⁰⁹ Coakley, “What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not?,” 146.

¹¹⁰ Coakley, “What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not?,” 145.

¹¹¹ James Stevenson and W. H. C. Frend, eds., *Creeds, Councils, and Controversies: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church, AD 337-461*, 3rd ed (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 80.

¹¹² Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 2.

¹¹³ Richard Cross, “On the Interpretation of Church Councils,” *TheoLogica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology* 4, no. 2 (December 31, 2020): 208, <https://doi.org/10.14428/thl.v4i2.60613>.

¹¹⁴ Coakley, “What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not?,” 149.

¹¹⁵ Coakley, “What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not?,” 150.

rules. They also function as riddles that simultaneously show us novel interpretations precisely through telling us what is not the case.¹¹⁶ Therefore, the apophatic regulation model, like the linguistic regulation model, suggests the creeds do not offer a full systematic account with a complete and precise metaphysic. Their function is to (1) rule out various aberrant interpretations, to (2) provide a rule of language, and for the apophatic model also to (3) give a “riddle” of negatives by which some positive new content may be understood.¹¹⁷

The final option, metaphorical regulation, is the most flexible, being what Coakley has termed a “post-Kantian” rendition wherein any sort of interpretation of the creeds is given conceptual space, since *all* language of God is radically improper. The creeds then become “harmlessly ornamental *and* simultaneously ‘radically improper.’”¹¹⁸ Even more, the formula can make quite literally no sense—it has no conceptual content whatsoever.¹¹⁹

Unfortunately, none of these directly map onto what a properly consensus *Conciliar* model would offer. As noted, the patristic fathers themselves thought a grammatical approach alone was insufficient. But it is not clear that an apophatic model is sufficient either. What is necessary is a further criterion that retains the viability of various justifications for the claims of the definition while also requiring more than mere shared language. Therefore, along with Vincent, I utilize his two additional criteria: (1) a council, ecumenical creed, or ecumenically approved document (2) important historical witnesses such as confessions of faith and theological “masters” (e.g., pastors/bishops, theologians, etc.).

I take it that chief among “important historical witnesses” from the second criterion are the later confessional documents (e.g., the Westminster Confession of Faith) that expand on, without revising, the earlier creedal tradition. These are all artifacts that were approved by most Christian pastors and theologians within their region or ecclesial tradition and authorized with binding force. I take it that the items within the creedal formulas have a privileged status whereas “what is held in common” by the various confessional documents should be understood as consensus. This allows for the various ecclesial tradition distinctives to remain without creating a complete lack of consensus. Where an item is not carefully described in one of these documents a consensus can be described as the majority view over the period since Jesus’s death and resurrection. I assume this approach’s validity for the sake of argument. “Majority” is admittedly vague and intentionally so. Each case must be articulated on its own to determine what constitutes a true “consensus.”

But of course, a further challenge is that no matter what additional criteria are added, there remains a sort of infinite regress wherein each additional criterion requires its own interpretation. We need councils and creeds

¹¹⁶ Coakley, “What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not?,” 156.

¹¹⁷ Coakley, “What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not?,” 161.

¹¹⁸ Coakley, “What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not?,” 151.

¹¹⁹ Coakley, “What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not?,” 153.

to determine a consensus view of Scripture but then we need additional resources to make sense of the councils and creeds themselves, and on it goes. Developing a complete solution to this problem requires significant argumentation that is too far afield from my project, but I modestly contend that the more witnesses we have, the easier it is to determine meaning without worries of interpretive chaos. For example, if we only had one conciliar document like Nicaea that used the term “homooousios” without the additional letters and treatises from Athanasius, the Cappadocian’s, Cyril, and later confessional documents, then it would be reasonable to wonder if one’s interpretation was correct. But in fact, we have numerous important documents working out just what homooousios means and doesn’t mean. Therefore, I assume that it is reasonably possible to determine the meaning of Conciliar Christology and other doctrines, though sometimes it requires argument to prove!

Consider an example to highlight what this Vincent inspired proposal might look like in practice. Let’s take the “reasonable soul” as the prime example since it features later in the thesis. The creedal formulas and approved documents do not spell out exactly what the metaphysics of the reasonable soul are. They do not speak to whether Platonic dualism is assumed or otherwise. The later confessional documents also do not have approved explicit views. They may have various sections that gesture at views but much philosophical reflection upon entailments would be required.

What then of the views of the authors or approvers of these documents? If there were a strong consensus (e.g., Platonic dualism of some sort) by the architects or by the delegates that approved the document, there seems to be at least good *prima facie* reason that such a view should be given privileged status. But if there were important figures that were approved and supported by the councils or later confessional assemblies who disagreed with the “consensus,” there seems to be room for disagreement—indeed, there seems to no longer be a *consensus* at all but a divergence of similar views. For example, if Cyril of Alexandria rejected Platonic dualism and yet all other bishops agreed with Platonic dualism, there remains conceptual space to reject Platonic dualism since, despite a consensus in number, Cyril represents a significantly important and approved thinker whose thought was validated as representative of the Nicene legacy. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger is a key example for developing this sort of methodology when he argues that “catholicity was thus measured, not just by numbers, but by the importance of the see; importance, however, depended on apostolicity.”¹²⁰ The idea here is that we can’t just count up the number of delegates at Chalcedon and decide what is an orthodox understanding of rational soul.

What’s more, if there was no consensus view on what a reasonable soul was (metaphysically speaking), with some of opinion that reasonable soul meant “mental life” and nothing further (e.g., nothing about

¹²⁰ Joseph Ratzinger, *God’s Word: Scripture-Tradition-Office*, ed. Peter Hünermann and Thomas Söding, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2020), 33.

metaphysical constitution) and others thinking it meant an immaterial substantial soul akin to substance dualism, then there is exponentially good reason to allow flexibility for what it means that Jesus is made of a reasonable soul and body. And this is precisely what I take to be true in the case of the “soul” in the conciliar tradition. These authoritative documents are only “lightly-determined” in the sense that they are open to a range of expansion. The vagueness here is intentional. As noted patristic scholar Lewis Ayres argues, the areas that lack precision are “providentially under-determined philosophically.”¹²¹ Therefore, I take it that Coakley’s “literal regulation” model is insufficient. As such, I do not employ its methodology throughout this thesis. While I’ve sought to provide a model that is “thicker” than the pure “grammatical regulation” model, I leave this open for debate on a case by case basis, but attempt to prove by force of argument when it is required.

In brief summation, I suggest that Oliver Crisp is right on this point. One might understand a “reasonable soul” as merely the mental aspect of a human person.¹²² It is a mistake to let the rational soul have a life of its own in a more substantial sense. It merely means a human way of thinking.¹²³ To say something has a reasonable soul might just be to say that it has a set of mental features. No souls exist, even as material things. To have a soul is just the same as to have a limp, i.e., to possess a property, not to stand in a mereological parthood relation to “something.” In this case, any form of dualism as I have defined it would be consistent with the Chalcedonian claim.

2.3.2 Rational Souls and the Tradition

The second reason to reject the necessity of substance dualism is within the tradition itself. To rebuff the necessity of substance dualism given the Conciliar requirement of a reasonable or rational soul what is necessary, by my lights as shown above, is either the lack of a consensus or significant historical figures contrary to the consensus view. I suggest we have such recourse. I begin by showing that there is not a consensus on substance dualism. Those that think stronger forms of dualism, like substance dualism, are the default position of the church after the Apollinarian controversy are wrong.¹²⁴ This conveniently ignores orthodox thinkers prior to the Apollinarian controversy in the second and third centuries, who had no problem arguing for materialistic conceptions of the soul. These were, in large part, a *majority* prior to Apollinaris.¹²⁵ Further, even after Apollinaris, there is a strong stream of non-substance dualist approaches to the human person throughout the Christian tradition.

¹²¹ Ayres, *Christological Hellenism*, 61.

¹²² Crisp, *God Incarnate*, 152.

¹²³ Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 213.

¹²⁴ See, for example, Crisp, *God Incarnate*, 153.

¹²⁵ Benjamin P. Blosser, “The Ensoulment of the Body in Early Christian Thought,” in *A History of Mind and Body in Late Antiquity*, ed. Anna Marmodoro and Sophie Cartwright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 211, 214.

For example, a large part of the Christian tradition affirms hylemorphism.¹²⁶ Hylemorphism, by and large, denies the “soul’s” ability to exist apart from the material body, which appears irreconcilable with substance dualism. In fact, the chief distinctive of hylemorphism is that human persons are a compound of soul and body. It does not consider the human person as merely an immaterial soul or made up of an independently existing immaterial soul joined to an independently existing body. Thomas Aquinas is representative of hylemorphism when he says that “the soul and the body make up one single being, and.... they have not each a distinct being.”¹²⁷ Again, Thomas says, “body and soul are not two actually existing substances; rather, the two of them together constitute one actually existing substance.”¹²⁸ Therefore, for hylemorphism, the soul alone does not constitute the person. It is only one aspect.¹²⁹ The body-soul composite is, properly speaking, what exists.¹³⁰ Now, I must be clear here that hylemorphism as I understand it does not view either the body or soul to be *parts* that make up the person. They are *sui generis* constituents—the hylemorphic compound is grounded in these constituents—that is, they are the fundamental and inseparable aspects of the whole.¹³¹

For ordinary organisms then, the soul is the actualization of a living or organic body.¹³² It is not an existing substance in its own right. The soul acts as a life principle that invigorates and structures the previously unformed prime matter. The soul is whatever it is that distinguishes something alive from something dead. Therefore, for hylemorphism, the living body isn’t a distinct substance apart from the soul—the body is the human substance itself. The human organism is the result of the soul and prime matter interaction as formal and material causes. Thus, it is the product of soul and body together which can be called an “ensouled thing” or the human organism.¹³³ If this is true, thinkers as large as Thomas Aquinas to Bonaventure (1221–1274) would stand apart from the apparent “consensus” view (though, of course, I deny that it is *the* consensus).

But more importantly, the “consensus” view in the fifth century that leads to the development of the Chalcedonian definition doesn’t ubiquitously represent or defend substance dualism. For example, Theodore of Mopsuestia (350–428) argued that Jesus needed an immortal soul which he defined as a “principle of life and activity.”¹³⁴ It is this “principle of life” sort of language that is common in the 4th and 5th century literature for soul. This “animating principle” sort of language is about whatever it is that “gives rise” to life and

¹²⁶ See my previous essay from which I borrow some of the following explanation of hylemorphism: Jordan L. Steffaniak, “Retrieving Reformed Philosophy of Mind: Herman Bavinck’s Eclectic Harmonism as Gateway to Neo-Aristotelianism,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 94 (2023): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.1163/27725472-09401006>.

¹²⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles: Book Two: Creation*, trans. James F. Anderson (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1975), II.57.6.

¹²⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles: Book Two: Creation*, II.69.2.

¹²⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *The Treatise on Human Nature: Summa Theologiae 1a*, 75–89, trans. Robert Pasnau (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), I.q.75.a4.ad2.

¹³⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles: Book Two: Creation*, II.43.4.

¹³¹ Inman, *Substance and the Fundamentality of the Familiar: A Neo-Aristotelian Mereology*, 85, 100–101; Koons, “Staunch vs. Faint-Hearted Hylomorphism,” 158.

¹³² Aristotle, *De Anima: Books II and III with Passages from Book I*, trans. D. W. Hamlyn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), II.1, 412a27; Robert Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes: 1274 - 1671* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011), 552.

¹³³ Aristotle, *De Anima*, II.2, 414a14.

¹³⁴ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 304.

maintains it. It is the difference between a corpse and a living being. It is the immaterial animating principle that enlivens a material substance arranged body-wise. The soul “gives rise” to the life functions and characteristics of animals like sensation and appetite, and for humans, rationality.¹³⁵ In other words, the soul “animates” living bodies and is the totality of conscious life.¹³⁶ While the soul doesn’t describe an additional “force,” it does describe the state of being a living being.

Consider also other Conciliar declarations such as the letter of the bishops gathered at Constantinople I in 381. It claims that Christ is not “soulless nor mindless.”¹³⁷ The point here is that the concept of the soul appears to be equated with the mind. If true, this seems to give alternative models a reasonable way to explain what a rational soul is—a human mind—a concept which all anthropological models utilize. Later, at the Council of Ephesus in 431, the second letter from Cyril to Nestorius that was approved by the council explains that Christ “united to himself hypostatically flesh enlivened by a rational soul.”¹³⁸ Cyril elsewhere explains that Christ “makes his own all that belongs, as to His own body, so to the soul, for He had to be shown to be like us through every circumstance both physical and mental, and we consist of rational soul and body.”¹³⁹ So, the soul represents the mental life but is also the principle that accounts for life.¹⁴⁰ But a life principle, whatever that metaphysically amounts to, does not entail substance dualism by itself.

Now, this doesn’t mean substance dualism, especially of the Platonic sort, is absent from Christian reflection. There are patristic thinkers that describe the soul in ways more akin to substance dualism such as Gregory of Nyssa (335–394), Nemesius of Emesa (d. 390), John of Damascus (675/76–749) who all explicitly say that the soul has *nothing* in common with the body.¹⁴¹ This “nothing in common” is generally taken to mean that the soul is not only metaphysically distinct in its ontology but that it is an entirely *distinct* thing. The soul and body must exist independently—hence, dualism of substance. Therefore, some thinkers in the creedal tradition do explicitly affirm that Christ’s human nature has an animating principle, a normal human mind, and these are understood as a “reasonable soul” which is in stark contrast to a material body.¹⁴²

¹³⁵ Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 37.

¹³⁶ Blosser, “The Ensoulment of the Body in Early Christian Thought,” 208.

¹³⁷ “First Council of Constantinople 381,” Papal Encyclicals, accessed July 26, 2021, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum02.htm>.

¹³⁸ “The Council Of Ephesus – 431 A.D.,” Papal Encyclicals, accessed July 25, 2021, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum03.htm>.

¹³⁹ Leo Donald Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 152.

¹⁴⁰ Andrew Davison and Jacob Holsinger Sherman, “Christian Platonism and Natural Science,” in *Christian Platonism: A History*, ed. Alexander J. B. Hampton and John Peter Kenney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 369.

¹⁴¹ Blosser, “The Ensoulment of the Body in Early Christian Thought,” 215.

¹⁴² Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787)*, 142.

However, while the leaders of the councils were certainly dualists, it is not necessarily clear from the text or the spirit of the definition itself that rational souls must be understood in entirely substance dualist ways.¹⁴³ As Glenn Andrews Peoples explains, “the goal was not to have a model of Christ that was dualistic, but to have a model of Christ that was really human. That it was also dualistic was incidental.”¹⁴⁴ The main meaning behind the “of a rational soul and body” phrase, as suggested by the Apollinarian debate, is that Christ was fully human with a fully human psychology and not just a body. There is a distinctive “human” way of knowing and willing that is what we mean by the rational soul.¹⁴⁵

Other models, like non-reductive materialism, can affirm that Christ had a fully human psychology distinct from the divine Word in addition to a body. They can affirm that Christ had a distinctive human way of knowing and willing. They simply tell a story about the nature of Christ’s mental life that is different than substance dualism. He has a human mind like all humans do but it isn’t a separate immaterial substance.¹⁴⁶ Christ’s human mind is either identical to the material body or grounded in the material, whereas a substance dualist requires a separate immaterial substance.¹⁴⁷

With all of this in mind, one can be faithful to the creeds, the Chalcedonian definition, its language, and the goal of the historical framers without needing to accept all their non-creedal assumptions. This is so for three primary reasons. First, the creeds themselves are consistent with alternative metaphysical frameworks like Neo-Aristotelian dualism. Second, the intention of the authors of the creeds was not to include every metaphysical detail. Had the authors wanted to enshrine their background metaphysical commitments, they certainly could have given that they were willing to canonize entire treatises from individual thinkers. So long as we are consistent with the intention of the signs of the creed (e.g., the semantics), we remain faithful to the true meaning. Third, we have abundant documentation in conciliar approved documents, later confessional documents, and “theological masters” that provide alternative anthropological accounts to jettison the idea that Platonic dualism is *the* consensus view. Therefore, those who argue that non-substance dualist views like Neo-Aristotelian dualism or materialism must “deviate” from a crucial aspect of the creeds are wrong.¹⁴⁸

Alternative models have the requisite metaphysical tools to explain that Christ had both a material body and a human “soul.”

¹⁴³ See van Inwagen for an argument similar to mine and Mullins for the common argument I discredit here, that substance dualism is the singular view of the tradition: Inwagen, “Dualism and Materialism,” 478–79; Mullins, “Physicalist Christology and the Two Sons Worry.”

¹⁴⁴ Glenn Andrew Peoples, “The Mortal God: Materialism and Christology,” in *The Ashgate Companion to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro (New York: Routledge, 2017), 336–37.

¹⁴⁵ Robert Lucas Stamps, “‘Thy Will Be Done’: A Dogmatic Defense of Dyothelitism in Light of Recent Monothelite Proposals” (PhD Dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 31.

¹⁴⁶ Crisp, *God Incarnate*, 151.

¹⁴⁷ Crisp, *God Incarnate*, 152.

¹⁴⁸ See those that argue this such as Loftin and Farris, “Christian Physicalism? An Introduction,” xx.

2.3.3 Rational Souls and Neo-Platonism

Third, I argue that most contemporary substance dualists are not consistent in their criticism of materialist (and other non-substance dualist views) affirmations of the creed. They lack consistency because the metaphysical explanations from the framers for what a rational soul is are oftentimes neo-platonic and in direct contradiction to much of contemporary substance dualism.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, the substance dualist cannot argue against other models on grounds of rejecting extra-creedal tradition on the nature of the soul. The substance dualist must likewise reject the metaphysics of the framers. While their rationale may be “closer,” there remains revision. And their arguments tend to rely on requiring a strong consensus view which is historically untenable.

For example, consider the disciple of Basil (330–379) and Gregory, Evagrius Ponticus (345–399). He speaks of the mind falling to the status of soul and then falling again to the status of body. He also claims that we will eventually be “liberated” from our bodies.¹⁵⁰ He has a strong hierarchical view of the nature of the soul and its relation to the body. These are straightforward neo-platonic claims. If we assume affirming the Chalcedonian definition requires affirming the metaphysics of the framers, in a way reminiscent of a “strong consensus” or “literal regulation,” we should also require assent to these same viewpoints. However, most substance dualists would recoil at this sweeping requirement. They would likely reply with frameworks akin to what I’ve attempted to offer here. The view of Ponticus is not that of the consensus or it is rather similar to the intended meaning and that the metaphysics of the framers is a matter of degrees, which Ponticus meets. However one answers it, it seems appropriate to realize that a strong consensus or strict literal regulation is false. Therefore, we should opt for a weak consensus or grammatical styled regulation and allow for some level of flexibility in metaphysically loaded and contested concepts like souls.

2.4 Chalcedonian Participation

Finally, the fourth important claim from the definition is that Jesus is “consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood.” I take this to be an expansion of the claim that Jesus has two natures—one divine and one human. Christ is of the same nature, or *consubstantial*, with God and man. Consubstantial as a term here in English covers up the original Greek term which is the famed “*homoousias*.” The meaning here is not that of substance in our technical medieval sense but that of natural kind. The idea that Jesus’ humanness must be like us is a common emphasis in Scripture and theology. Therefore, this Chalcedonian addition makes it clear that Jesus must be constituted like us. He must have a human nature.

¹⁴⁹ Blosser, “The Ensoulment of the Body in Early Christian Thought,” 214.

¹⁵⁰ Sophie Cartwright, “Soul and Body in Early Christianity: An Old and New Conundrum,” in *A History of Mind and Body in Late Antiquity*, ed. Anna Marmodoro and Sophie Cartwright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 186.

However, I do not assume from this claim that natures as natural kinds must be what Jeff Brower has called “common universals.” A common universal is just a natural kind with the additional claim that all members of this natural kind have the same (i.e., identical) nature. Their likeness is not resemblance alone. Their likeness is that they share the identical universal “human nature” or whatever it may be.¹⁵¹ The Chalcedonian definition does not offer a complex theory of universals at all. Therefore, it makes good sense why numerous Christian thinkers do not develop their account of natures in the common universal sense (though many certainly do!). It seems quite acceptable to construe things along a more moderate realist approach or even a nominalist approach (though as I’ve suggested, nominalism (like many modern Humean accounts) must work much harder to explain how pure resemblance can make sense of being “consubstantial”—indeed, I’m not sure they can). On a moderate realist approach there are common characteristics that are more than resemblances but they are not universals. Each individual instance has its own human nature which is not strictly identical to any other (no one shares in a universal human nature that is multiply instantiated). However, each individual instance has a human nature that is internally structured the same. Although my human nature is really distinct from President Biden’s, there is no difference in themselves in any way. Jeff Brower has described this as “two tropes that differ solely in virtue of being related to distinct bare particulars.”¹⁵² Being members of the same natural kind (in this case, consubstantial), then, can be cashed out in terms of possessing distinct but resembling natures rather than by possessing numerically the same nature.¹⁵³ Whatever natural kind “humanness” is, then, Jesus must be a member of that natural kind. But the natural kind human cannot include the property of being a sinner in any sense.

2.5 The Metaphysics of Becoming Human

The Apostle John’s claim that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14a) is a touchstone for all Christological discourse. Whatever someone understands by the incarnation flows from it. The eternal Son of God, in some mysterious way, becomes human. In the Christian tradition this “becoming human” is cashed out via several technical terms that are annexed to either the act of becoming human or the resultant state of being human and dwelling among us. The act of becoming human is called the *assumption* whereas the resultant state is called the *hypostatic union*.¹⁵⁴ These terms are not designed to explain anything additional but to name the phenomenon we’re talking about. While assumption can be a stand-in for both the act and state since it entails the result of the state, I treat the act and state separately here for logical clarity. There are various further terms and models that explain these concepts. In what follows I explore these further terms

¹⁵¹ Brower, “Aquinas on the Problem of Universals,” 720.

¹⁵² Brower, “Aquinas on the Problem of Universals,” 729–33.

¹⁵³ Brower, “Aquinas on the Problem of Universals,” 723. One might be helped by a modern example of single versus multi-tenant systems wherein on the single tenant system, every instance is its own unique individual instance but on the multi-tenant model, while all have their own access, it is the exact same instance that each “participate” in.

¹⁵⁴ James E. Dolezal, “Neither Subtraction, Nor Addition: The Word’s Terminative Assumption of a Human Nature,” *Nova et Vetera* 20, no. 1 (Winter 2022): 135n10.

and models before recommending one model as a standard Chalcedonian approach for metaphysical theorizing. These terms and concepts will be deployed throughout the remainder of the thesis.

2.5.1 The Act of Assumption

Traditionally, the act of assumption is defined with two aspects: (1) the *agent* that is the active cause of assumption (which is typically taken to be the undivided Trinity) and (2) the *patient* that is the passive recipient of the action (which is the Son alone) whose state is then of being undividedly united to a human nature.¹⁵⁵ Such usage of agents and patients, where agents are what cause things to happen and patients are acted upon, is standard in the philosophy of action.¹⁵⁶

As a simple example, each morning I dress my young children. Naturally, it appears that I am the agent who is causing the act of getting dressed. I tell each of them it's time to get ready for the day and bring them their clothes. I then put on their shirt and pants. They are the patient in the action, receiving the dressing of the clothes. But they aren't merely passive. Both of my children also share in the action of this event—mostly resisting and avoiding in their case, but sticking their legs through the pants and arms through the shirt, nonetheless. Therefore, while they are the only ones being dressed, they are agents alongside me. Similarly, in the act of assumption it is the Trinity as an undivided whole that is the agent of the act, which includes the Son, but the Son alone is the patient. The undivided Trinity isn't united to a human nature, only the Son is. However, the undivided Trinity causes the assumption to occur in the Son. The Trinitarian agency of the act is common to traditional Christological accounts and will be taken as a given. While contemporary debates center on whether it is coherent to think the entire Trinity can act “inseparably” my focus is especially on the Christological character of the assumption.

While the act of assumption can be parsed into the agent and patient of the act, the terminology of patient isn't nearly as ubiquitous. Theologians have more often used the terminology of “termination” to refer to the patient aspect of the assumption. The undivided Trinitarian act *terminates* on a singular person—the Son.¹⁵⁷ Termination, then, locates the unique reception of assumption as limited to the Son alone and not to all three persons of the Trinity. In more standard philosophical terms, termination could be compared to simple predication. The state of union is predicated of the Son alone.¹⁵⁸ In this case, the act is the uniting of a human nature with the person of the Son.

¹⁵⁵ Adonis Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things: Inseparable Operations in Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 161.

¹⁵⁶ Sarah K. Paul, *Philosophy of Action: A Contemporary Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 9.

¹⁵⁷ Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things*, 167.

¹⁵⁸ Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things*, 161.

2.5.2 The State of Hypostatic Union

The resultant state of the act of assumption is the hypostatic union which is the union of the human nature and the divine nature in the person of the Son. In technical terms, the union is often explained by the Son obtaining a new dependence relation wherein his human nature *depends* on the person of the Word for its existence. By dependence relation I just mean the generic claim that one thing depends on another for its existence. If A depends on B, then if B fails to exist so does A. In Aristotelian jargon, this is often explained as “accidents” depending on their “substance.”¹⁵⁹ For example, the whiteness of Socrates depends on Socrates for its existence. Apart from Socrates, it would not exist. Likewise, apart from the Word the human nature of Jesus wouldn’t exist. Its existence is dependent on the Word assuming it which maps back onto the discussions of person and subsistence. This scenario is obviously different from the case of whiteness since we are talking about a human nature—what is normally a subsistence—and not simply a color or quality of some sort. But of course the incarnation is supposed to be a completely unique event—one that we do not have a relevant analogue for, so in some sense we will fail to have the exact analogy for it.

Some have explained this dependence relation in terms of instrumentality such as Thomas Joseph White who says, “the human nature of Jesus (his body and soul) is an instrument of his person, in an analogical and unique sense of the term.”¹⁶⁰ However, when terms are given unique *sui generis* applications without clear explanation, they do not serve the pursuit of philosophical clarity very well. Therefore, I’ve sought to avoid the general use of terms like “instrument” unless what is meant by it is a commonsense use of the term.

Apart from the Son’s human nature’s dependence on the person of the Son it did not exist and would not exist.¹⁶¹ As the authors of the *Synopsis of Purer Theology* stated, the Son assumed his human nature “in such a way that the flesh does not exist on its own or apart from the Son of God, but it is maintained and borne by and in him.”¹⁶² So, the concrete instance of Christ’s human nature *depends* on the person of the Son *because* of the act of assumption. Apart from assumption there would be no instance of human nature that we could identify as “Jesus Christ.” This is an explanatory claim. In other words, the act of assumption explains why the human nature exists and is united to the Son.

2.6 Chalcedonian Orthodoxy

From this textual analysis and effort to define the various technical terms that will often be necessary to deploy, I suggest there are (at least) five primary principles for anyone committed to Conciliar Christology. This list is not exhaustive and I deploy various other aspects of Conciliar Christology such as the doctrine of

¹⁵⁹ Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, 35.

¹⁶⁰ White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 113.

¹⁶¹ Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things*, 161.

¹⁶² Willem Arie den Boer and Riemer A. Faber, eds., *Synopsis of a Purer Theology* (Landrum, SC: Davenant Press, 2023), 278–79.

the resurrection in what follows. However, these are the most important, and often highly technical and contentious aspects of Christology. Therefore, I find it especially useful to clarify their meaning.

- 1) Christ is one person
- 2) Christ has a divine and human nature
- 3) The two natures of Christ are hypostatically united in the person of Christ without confusion, change, division, or separation
- 4) Christ's human nature consists of both a rational soul and a body
- 5) Christ's human nature is consubstantial with the rest of humanity except sin¹⁶³

While others could be added to this list, such as clarifying his divine nature, I take these five as minimally axiomatic in what follows. Anyone, whether dualist or monist, is bound to affirm these lest orthodoxy be abandoned. Therefore, these general principles play a key role as arbiter of various philosophical disputes. But as indicated, I also develop accounts of the doctrine of resurrection and the descent in conjunction with these Christological claims that are also part of Conciliar Christology as found in the Apostles' Creed and other conciliar dogma.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have set the stage for the forthcoming arguments against substance dualism and in defense of materialism (and by extension, other models like Neo-Aristotelian dualism). I seek to employ a modest Christological anthropology that aids in adjudicating thorny debates about the mind and body. I do not expect to resolve every problem but hope that my research program illuminates options available to those committed to classical Christology and classical theology more generally. It may be that my Conciliar consensus model is ultimately flawed, but even if the question of how to handle tradition (and the metaphysical backdrop of authoritative texts/figures) is left unsettled, fruit is born from my methodology. For example, I deal with various classical doctrines like impassibility at points, assuming the truth of all so-called classical doctrines whenever possible and not just traditional Christology alone. I also hope my research program is generative of new ways of thinking about both the mind and body and Christology more generally.

While I've sought to avoid technical jargon, some has been necessary to explain and put to work throughout this thesis. Terms and concepts related to "persons," "natures," and "union" are generally unavoidable. For those that would prefer to define these terms alternatively, they are welcome to do so but I accept the standard Chalcedonian account of them given the nature of my thesis. I seek to deploy the standard accounts of the incarnation found in Conciliar theology. Some of the components of each of these will be further

¹⁶³ See also Crisp, *God Incarnate*, 141.

developed in the chapters that follow but what I've outlined here should be regularly useful for the entirety of the thesis.

3 - THE NECESSITY OF THE NUMERICALLY IDENTICAL BODY FOR THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF RESURRECTION

The bodily resurrection is confessed throughout the history of Christianity. This much is clear. For example, the ancient Apostles' Creed plainly declares belief in "the resurrection of the body." Anyone committed to Conciliar Christology must affirm Jesus's literal bodily resurrection. However, there is not the same level of clarity on what this bodily resurrection metaphysically amounts to. Just what do we need for something to be a resurrection? Must someone die to be resurrected? What even counts as death? Must someone maintain the numerically same material body? And so on. In what follows I provide several reasons to think that the bodily resurrection requires (or at least naturally privileges) the resurrection of the numerically identical body for it to be Christian resurrection. If this is the case, I argue that substance dualism fails Ockham's razor and is, at best, theologically and philosophically unsatisfying given the doctrine of resurrection. In doing so, I also provide a novel approach to defending the resurrection of the numerically identical body on a materialist paradigm deploying the work of Peter van Inwagen.

To avoid begging the question, I use the terminology of resurrecting "bodies" rather than "persons," "organisms," or the like. This may be less technically accurate, depending on the theory, but I take it that I can define "body" vaguely as the physical object that is "mine" and remain non-committal to metaphysical theories of what bodies are, while communicating meaning.¹⁶⁴ A substance dualist and materialist can say bodies exist. While both understand our relation to them differently, both believe we have (or are) bodies. There is a material thing sitting here at my desk typing this paragraph, which is my body. Therefore, the reader is invited to import their desired metaphysics behind the usage of the "bodily" resurrection throughout—whether that body is only a proper part of or identical to the human person is irrelevant at this point.

I begin by defining resurrection and offering several reasons why the resurrection of the numerically same body is important for the concept to make sense. While it is theoretically "easier" for God to make a numerically distinct "new" body at the "resurrection," and though it solves a host of traditional problems about resurrecting the same body, it is theologically, historically, and philosophically unsatisfying. One might be tempted to ignore this for the payoff of avoiding various philosophical puzzles about resurrecting dead, decaying, or completely destroyed bodies. God could conveniently avoid these nasty problems if he just

¹⁶⁴ Peter van Inwagen, "The Possibility of Resurrection," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 9, no. 2 (1978): 115.

creates a brand new body or doesn't even need a body.¹⁶⁵ Despite the potential challenges, there are several motivations that outweigh these neat solutions to traditional metaphysical problems. But even if these motivations turn out to be false, it is still of great interest to consider the nature of the resurrection by assuming the truth of the resurrection of numerically identical bodies since the great majority of Christian theologians have done so. If one is partial to tradition, then one will desire a metaphysic of human persons that can “work” for resurrection of this sort!

3.1 Defining the Doctrine of the Resurrection from Scripture

There are several reasons to think that resurrection just means the bringing back to life of the numerically identical body that died. There are difficult metaphysical questions involved with even this claim, though. What is necessary for numerical identity? Do we need the same material atoms that made up the body immediately upon death? Do we need less than that, maybe the same skeleton? And so on. Before engaging questions like these I begin by providing a commonsense approach to the term of resurrection as it is found in Scripture before moving to six arguments in favor of an interpretation of resurrection as requiring the numerical identical body.

The definition of resurrection itself intuitively implies the resurrection of a numerically identical material body instead of alternative explanations.¹⁶⁶ The term “resurrection” (ἀνάστασις) means bringing a dead body to life. It is defined by standard Greek lexicons as “to come back to life after having once died.”¹⁶⁷ This definition means that the individual comes back to life, but this includes a living *body* and not merely a stand in for the individual, whether that be a soul or something else. The reason we should assume this is the case is because there are more than a dozen similar words within its semantic range that could be used for other ideas of resurrection such as re-creating a new body. But this is the word that is used. Given this *and* how it is used throughout the context of the Gospel writers (and other New Testament writers), it is modest to contend that the term, at the very minimum, suggests that without the *very same body* being enlivened, it isn't resurrection.¹⁶⁸ This is how important figures in the Christian tradition have similarly understood it. Francis Turretin (1623–1687) says, “the numerical identity of bodies in the resurrection being denied, the resurrection itself is denied” and cites Jerome (c. 342–420) saying the same.¹⁶⁹ Saint Albert the Great (1200–1280), likewise, defines resurrection as distinct from concepts like resuscitation which are not “properly speaking” what the Christian

¹⁶⁵ See Inwagen, “The Possibility of Resurrection,” 116–18.

¹⁶⁶ Joshua Mugg and James T. Turner, “Why a Bodily Resurrection?: The Bodily Resurrection and the Mind/Body Relation,” *Journal of Analytic Theology* 5, no. 1 (April 12, 2017): 122, <https://doi.org/10.12978/jat.v5i1.153>; Trenton Merricks, “The Resurrection of the Body and Life Everlasting,” in *Reason for the Hope Within*, ed. Michael J. Murray (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 281.

¹⁶⁷ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Hendrickson Publishers, 2019), 23.93.

¹⁶⁸ Lloyd Strickland, “The Doctrine of ‘The Resurrection of the Same Body’ in Early Modern Thought,” *Religious Studies* 46, no. 2 (2010): 164.

¹⁶⁹ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1994), 3:572.

doctrine of resurrection means.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, without examining every instance in detail or various Hebrew terms or ideas, it is at least *prima facie* true that resurrection entails this.

If resurrection must include the re-enlivening of the same body (e.g., it may include other things related to the soul), then even if we give the same person a *new* body (however they are metaphysically related to it, be it identity or otherwise) that is numerically distinct, it's not resurrection—at least it's not resurrection without a clear explanation for why it should be understood as such. Simply receiving a brand new numerically distinct body seems closer to re-creation than resurrection. Nor does the term naturally lend itself to meaning granting a second existence to a body, whether that be accomplished by reincarnation or something else. Nor does it intuitively suggest a miraculous avoidance of death to preserve the body. To be clear, there is nothing metaphysically wrong with re-creation, reincarnation, or avoiding death *per se*. But if we are wanting to reconstruct a doctrine of resurrection, we need it to be *resurrection* and not something else.

Therefore, resurrection, according to the intuitive and common sense reading of the terminology in the New Testament just means bringing the very same dead body back to life. This is similarly what the creedal authors of the ecumenical creeds (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed) intended. Jesus dies, is buried, and on the third day rises again from the dead. Because the creedal formula includes the burying of Jesus' body, it is a natural implication that they do not merely mean Jesus as an individual apart from his body. So, even if we could make sense of the fact that Jesus dies and rises again without a body, the burial clauses impel us to require a body for each aspect of the resurrection. While the term, by itself, may appear to be consistent with Jesus not having the same body, the fact that burial occurs and something is supposed to come out of the grave—a body, *his* body—we should at the minimum assume the need for a numerically identical body without compelling counterevidence to the contrary.

If one seeks to excise the numerically identical body from the definition of resurrection, I suggest that it is no longer resurrection of which they speak. For example, if a simple definition of a dog is an animal that barks with a typically long snout, then if I sought to remove the necessity of barking from the definition, it would no longer be categorized as a dog. Given the simplicity of this illustration I am not intending to claim this is the definition of a dog or that an animal couldn't be categorized as a dog and yet lack the ability to bark. The point is rather banal. If something is a necessary condition of a definition, it cannot be removed and remain the same item we are defining.

But whatever one makes of the textual arguments themselves, I'll largely leave this to the experts in those fields. I'm more interested in the philosophical implications of assuming that Jesus's resurrection demands

¹⁷⁰ Albertus, *On Resurrection*, trans. Irven M. Resnick and Franklin T. Harkins (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 38.

the numerically identical body prior to death and after it. So, while I've sought to give some rationale for thinking resurrection means this, and will provide more throughout this chapter, I am happy to assume its truth for the sake of argument and philosophical inquiry. If some of the evidence here in favor of it is overturned, that does not subtract from the implications of the philosophical explorations.

Now, let's take a scriptural example from 1 Corinthians 15:53–54 to think about what the doctrine of resurrection entails.¹⁷¹ Here the Apostle Paul claims that “this mortal body” puts on immortality. If the Apostle thought the numerically same body wouldn't be resurrected, he wouldn't say “*this* mortal body” is the one that is resurrected. “This mortal body” would be dead, decomposed, and destroyed. “*This* mortal body” would have no share in the resurrection. But instead, he designates that this numerically identical body will experience the resurrection from the dead. How much of *this* body is required for it to be the numerically identical body is an important question, but not yet relevant, since the point here is to show that this generic claim is true: Christian resurrection is the resurrection of the numerically identical body that died and not another. Likewise, in the Old Testament (Ezekiel 37) the Prophet Ezekiel is told to prophesy to a valley of dry and dead bones with the intention for them to come back to life. As he does this the bones grow sinews and flesh once again. Then breath comes to them again and they begin to live. What is important is that the resurrection of these dead bones is of actual material bones and not a miraculous new creation out of dust alone.

Both examples bring up the question of what it takes for a body to be numerically identical (same bones? Same atoms? Same “person” having it?, etc.). In Christian thought the numerically identical body is typically understood to be resurrected via some method of divine reassembly of the material pieces of the former body. Just how many material parts and at what stage of life one's material parts must be derived from is a matter of much debate. Much of the very early church, despite Platonic intuitions about a host of topics including the person, maintained a strong consensus toward what appears materialistic by expecting resurrection to require all and only those bits of matter that composed one's body at the end of their life.¹⁷² But as time went on there were a great variety of similar views requiring only some bits of matter or bits of matter that composed a person at some time. There also were views that required only an “essential core” of a person's body. In fact, the “seed” is the oldest Christian metaphor for resurrection.¹⁷³ For now, it is sufficient to say that for resurrection to be resurrection there must be material and structural continuity of some sort. I will explore further models of numerical identity in a later section. Finally, there were various views that relied on the soul (or substantial form) and even mere divine fiat (though this mitigates against the

¹⁷¹ Mugg and Turner, “Why a Bodily Resurrection?” 126; Turretin, *IET*, 3:572.

¹⁷² Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity: 200 - 1336*, Lectures on the History of Religions (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1995), 9–11.

¹⁷³ Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity*, 3.

entire notion of resurrection) for numerical identity of the body, though these are less consistent with how the numerical body is understood in Scripture as noted here.¹⁷⁴

So, on this definition of resurrection, there are several necessary conditions for it to be “resurrection.” The resurrection of the once dead body must 1) be miraculous 2) maintain the numerically same body.¹⁷⁵ A few notes on these are in order to cement the necessity of the same body for the resurrection. The first condition, requiring a miracle, means that resurrection is not a natural activity since the finality of death is natural. It is a supernatural event in which a once dead body is given life. Any theory of resurrection that allows for natural reconstitution of life isn’t resurrection. I am defining a miracle thinly as a supernatural event, which means that it is the direct action of God and not another. Natural events are those that include natural causation and processes. I do not intend to take a stand on whether miracles violate the laws of nature, etc. So, say Sarah freezes her body before death, or just at death, in hopes that science one-day can understand how to revivify her. Several hundred years pass and science stumbles upon the holy grail of solutions and unfreezes Sarah, brining her “back” into existence. This is not resurrection because it is by natural means. More so, there is the question of whether the person ever actually *died* in such a scenario. The miraculous event is the resurrection of a dead body, not an alive one. And most argue that suspension of life that isn’t final isn’t death. At the very least death means a cessation of existence. If one can resume their natural life after death without an supernatural power they haven’t died.¹⁷⁶ While there is lively debate as to *when* death occurs, whether that be biological, psychological, or sociological, there is no debate that whatever death is and whenever it happens it is *irreversible*.¹⁷⁷ In the case of freezing, if their biological, psychological, or sociological status is not irreversibly dead, they have not truly died. So, if the person never actually “died”, resurrection would be ruled out as well. The body must *die* for it to be resurrection. Anyone who avoids death is not resurrected. Therefore, it is resurrection if and only if it is a miraculous event bringing a person from death to life.

The second condition for resurrection as the Bible defines it is to bring the numerically same body back to life. It isn’t resurrection if the same body isn’t resurrected.¹⁷⁸ If one is given a numerically distinct “new” body, even if qualitatively indistinguishable, this would no longer be resurrection since resurrection entails bringing the numerically identical dead body to life and not granting a separate and new existence to

¹⁷⁴ See: Strickland, “The Doctrine of ‘The Resurrection of the Same Body’ in Early Modern Thought”; Christopher Woznicki, “‘Thus Saith the Lord’: Edwardsean Anti-Criterialism and the Physicalist Problem of Resurrection Identity,” *TheoLogica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology* 2, no. 1 (March 27, 2018): 115–35, <https://doi.org/10.14428/thl.v0i0.1333>.

¹⁷⁵ Lynne Rudder Baker, “Persons and the Metaphysics of Resurrection,” *Religious Studies* 43, no. 3 (2007): 339–40. I thicken her account beyond mere general embodiment as well as defining the other two conditions slightly different.

¹⁷⁶ J. Douglas Ousley, “The Possibility of Life after Death,” *Religious Studies* 9, no. 2 (1973): 158; Robert Francescotti, “Surviving Death: How to Refute Termination Theses,” *Inquiry* 61, no. 2 (2018): 183.

¹⁷⁷ D. Alan Shewmon, “The Brain and Somatic Integration: Insights Into the Standard Biological Rationale for Equating ‘Brain Death’ With Death,” *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 26, no. 5 (2001): 458; David DeGrazia, “The Definition of Death,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/death-definition/>.

¹⁷⁸ Mugg and Turner, “Why a Bodily Resurrection?,” 136.

something else. Identical embodiment is required to avoid not only duplicate bodies but also reincarnation since numerically distinct bodies are not resurrection but something else altogether.¹⁷⁹ So, resurrection is resurrection if and only if the numerically identical body is brought from death to life. Therefore, given the necessary conditions of resurrection, it requires the numerically identical body that dies to rise.

3.2 Further Motivation for the Numerically Identical Bodily Resurrection

While it seems clear enough that the working definition of resurrection found in the Christian Scriptures is of the numerically identical body there are several other philosophical and theological reasons to accept this. I offer six of these arguments in what follows to cement this necessity since it plays an important role in whether substance dualism is a desirable understanding of the human person.

3.2.1 The Metaphysical Argument for Numerical Resurrection

The first and most obvious motivation for the resurrection of the numerically identical body is metaphysical. For those committed to various versions of materialist metaphysics or even Neo-Aristotelian metaphysics, the resurrection of the very same body is required if the identity of the person is to be preserved. This is the case if we are identical to our bodies *or* if the body is essential to identity in a way that requires continuity via material parts or immanent causal connection (I will define this idea in greater detail in a later section). A resurrection without the same body means someone else is brought to life.

This is not the case for substance dualism since humans are identical to their immaterial souls that preserve identity. They need only *some* hunk of matter back in the resurrection. This is also not the case for constitutional theories where we are not our bodies but constituted by them. For constitutionalism humans are essentially embodied but not essentially numerically embodied. By this I mean that humans only exist if embodied but they can be given entirely new, and hence numerically distinct bodies, and exist as the numerically same “person” because of their continued psychological “first person perspective.”¹⁸⁰ Therefore, substance dualism and constitutional theories do not require the identity of the person in the resurrection since both do not need the very same body for identity to be preserved.¹⁸¹ Depending on how one cashes out hylemorphism, it may share the same fate as substance dualism or constitutionalism. If the body is not essential for identity, it too can posit a resurrection with a numerically distinct body. But some versions do require the body for identity.¹⁸² But for any variety of materialism (constitutionalism aside), the same body is

¹⁷⁹ Joshua Mugg, “Can I Survive without My Body? Undercutting the Modal Argument,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 84, no. 1 (August 2018): 76, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11153-017-9639-9>.

¹⁸⁰ Baker, “Persons and the Metaphysics of Resurrection,” 333–34.

¹⁸¹ *Contra* Omar Fakhri, “Physicalism, Bodily Resurrection, and the Constitution Account,” in *The Ashgate Companion to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro (New York: Routledge, 2017), 109.

¹⁸² James T. Turner, *On the Resurrection of the Dead: A New Metaphysics of Afterlife for Christian Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

necessary if resurrection is to obtain. No other motivation is needed for those committed to these varieties of materialism.

3.2.2 The Empty Tomb Argument for Numerical Resurrection

For those not committed to materialism, there remain other motivations. Preeminent is Jesus's empty tomb on resurrection Sunday. Call this the empty tomb argument. Now, this isn't a "knock-down" argument that necessarily leads one to the conclusion. It is more "suggestive" since it could be modified to be consistent with other views. But a natural reading of the resurrection narratives shows that the same body that was crucified was raised. Consider several of the biblical descriptions. Mark 16:6 and Matthew 28:6 emphasize that Jesus's body is no longer in the grave to prove that he has risen. Matthew 28:6 says, "He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay." The argument is quite simple. Since the corpse of Jesus is no longer in the tomb, he must be resurrected. It can be laid out as follows:

1. If Jesus's corpse is not in the tomb, then Jesus is resurrected
2. Jesus's corpse is not in the tomb
3. Therefore, Jesus is resurrected

What is assumed is that if Jesus's corpse remained in the tomb, then he wouldn't be resurrected. What makes the argument work is the numerically identical body being brought from death *as a corpse* to life *as resurrected*. If the same body remained in the tomb, even if another body for Jesus's mental activity was walking around the earth talking to people, then Jesus as Jesus wouldn't be resurrected. It would be someone else. The reason we can assume the additional premise here as true is because the nature of justification for resurrection hangs on the corpse no longer being present in the tomb. If Jesus had another body and his old corpse remained in the tomb, the gospel writers may be thrilled to meet Jesus once again but they would not describe him as being *resurrected*. So, the explanation for the missing body in the grave is the resurrection of the numerically same body.¹⁸³ There is no consideration that Jesus only needs to be alive spiritually for the disciples to rejoice or that Jesus could be given a numerically distinct body to be alive. The weight of the proof of his resurrection is the numerically same body being gone.

Thus, the empty tomb argument is the way the gospel writers and witnesses account for Jesus' resurrection is by his numerically identical body. They point to the empty tomb and his remaining wounds to prove that the man who died is alive. Had the body in the grave remained there, no matter how he manifested himself later, they wouldn't consider it resurrection. This hypothetical is certainly difficult to test but take another biblical example. Acts 12 details the story of the Apostle Peter being imprisoned before he was miraculously delivered

¹⁸³ Mugg and Turner, "Why a Bodily Resurrection?," 127.

by an angel. Once he was set free, he went to the house of Mary where many had been gathered praying for his deliverance. Upon his arrival, a servant girl greeted him and told everyone in the house that Peter was there. But “they said to her, ‘You are out of your mind.’ But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, ‘It is his angel!’” (Acts 12:15). They then came to the door and stood amazed that it was really Peter. This isn’t a story of resurrection, but it does show the common biblical intuition that a person’s numerically identical body is important. Had they thought Peter could obtain a new body or something else, certainly that would have come to mind. Even while this argument does rest on hypothetical assumptions, there still seems to be a good *prima facie* reason to privilege it.

Given this conclusion, the theological weight behind the empty tomb argument for the general doctrine of resurrection is this: no account of resurrection in general will succeed that fails to make sense of Jesus’ resurrection since the plausibility of resurrection is dependent on Jesus’ resurrection as both model, guarantee, and pinnacle.¹⁸⁴ There are two implications. First, as the gospel writers assume, if Jesus isn’t raised from the dead with the same body, he isn’t alive. Therefore, if we are resurrected in any way without our numerically identical body, we aren’t alive either.¹⁸⁵ Second, if Jesus’ resurrection is the model, guarantee, and pinnacle, and he is resurrected with the numerically same body, all who hope in the resurrection of the dead hope in the same resurrection with the numerically same body. Any hope in a resurrection without the numerically identical body is a hope in something other than Jesus’ resurrection. The reason the numerical identity of the body is necessary and not being of the same age or sex as Jesus is because the numerical identity of the body is part of the definition of resurrection whereas a person’s age or sex is not. So, if one is partial to the Christology described in the New Testament, one will defer to the resurrection of the numerically same body.

A second set of biblical texts giving this same styled argument is Luke 24:12 and John 20:4–8. They tell a similar tale about Peter and John running to the empty tomb and seeing the linen clothes of Jesus alone without the body of Jesus which spurs them to belief in his resurrection. Had the crucified body remained in the tomb, no matter how Jesus manifested himself as “alive” later, it wouldn’t be resurrection precisely because resurrection is looking for the corpse to be given life once again. For the numerically identical Jesus to be alive, his dead body must have no longer been dead. It must be resurrected.

A third biblical testimony makes the same argument in a more direct way. John 20:24–29 recounts the story of Jesus and Thomas, where Thomas doesn’t believe in the resurrection, claiming, “unless I see in his hands

¹⁸⁴ Stephen T. Davis, “Resurrection,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Philosophical Theology*, ed. Charles Taliaferro and Chad Meister (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 108, 110; Mugg, “Can I Survive without My Body?,” 76–78. See Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23; Philippians 3:20–21.

¹⁸⁵ Contra William Hasker, “The Case for Emergent Dualism,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, ed. Jonathan J. Loose, J. L. Menuge, and J. P. Moreland (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2018), 69; Lynne Rudder Baker, “Need a Christian Be a Mind/Body Dualist?,” *Faith and Philosophy* 12, no. 4 (1995): 493.

the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.” Over a week later, Jesus has Thomas put his finger in his hands and side. Thomas then confesses his belief. The point being that Thomas refused to believe until he encountered the very same body that was crucified as alive. Thomas would not be satisfied with Jesus’s resurrection having the numerically same body by virtue of his soul if it consisted of completely different bits of matter. Nor would he be satisfied if his “old” body remained in the tomb to rot, but he was “constituted” by a new body. This wouldn’t be resurrection for him.¹⁸⁶ Thomas wanted the crucified body to be alive, scars and all. Afterall, if the body is made the same by virtue of the soul, material markers like those scars would be irrelevant. And so, Thomas’s insistence on touching the *very* scars of Jesus would have little relevance for his faith in the resurrected Son. He doesn’t want a mystical version of Jesus like what characters in *Star Wars* have after they die, occasionally appearing as ghostly figures, offering advice to the living. Thomas would not be satisfied with a Jesus akin to the departed Obi One Kenobi or Yoda. They may remain sages, but they are not resurrected. So, for Thomas, the point is this: I will never believe in the resurrection unless the numerically same body of Jesus is given life. There can be no shortcuts to obtaining a truncated version of resurrection. Now, it is important to note that this is Thomas’s *belief* which doesn’t necessarily entail that his belief is the truth about the *metaphysics* of the matter. For all these arguments, it only works if we require the people involved—Thomas etc.—to have some penetrating metaphysical insight. What this has proved is that *these people* believed that to be the same person via resurrection the person needed the numerically identical body, not that it’s true (or, equivalently for my purpose, that the Bible purports it to be true—it only purports that people at the time, particularly prior to the time of a doctrine of Christian resurrection being promulgated—believed it). Therefore, the empty tomb argument, *by itself*, is not a sufficient justification for claiming the numerically identical body is required for resurrection.

3.2.3 The General Resurrection Argument for Numerical Resurrection

But maybe some find the resurrection of Jesus to be atypical despite its role as model, guarantee, and pinnacle. Occurrences like this, and other instances such as Lazarus (whose body was resurrected several days after dying—certainly none would have been impressed by Jesus had the body in the grave not come forth when he called forth. The people were grieving a specific person. Who there would stop weeping if Lazarus didn’t come forth with his old body?), are not normal because their bodies haven’t completely decomposed or been destroyed. Therefore, the empty tomb argument may be true for Jesus, but it isn’t true of others in general.

¹⁸⁶ Mugg and Turner, “Why a Bodily Resurrection?,” 127.

But in the very same narratives as Jesus' resurrection there is Matthew 27:51–53 (see also John 5:28–29). Matthew says: “And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.” In this story the very same bodies of the dead are raised from their tombs. These are bodies that have been dead for much more than several days and have been decomposing. What these bodies exactly looked like, whether fully restored or not, is not of great importance. If these bodies can be decomposed and remain the same, why not others? So, the argument could be this:

- 1) If all biblical examples of resurrection include the numerically identical body, then it is unlikely that any resurrection would not include the numerically identical body
- 2) No biblical examples of resurrection lack the numerically identical body
- 3) Therefore, it is unlikely that any resurrection would not include the numerically identical body.

This argument is not deductive and thus does not have a necessary inference. Instead, it is an inductive argument based on the information we have. It is therefore *prima facie* plausible to think that resurrection entails the numerically identical body. But even if we had an example of someone being resurrected in another way, there remains the theological claim that if Jesus' resurrection requires the same body, and his is the model, then his mode of resurrection is determinative for resurrection in general. At the very minimum we should exhaust all avenues for resurrecting the numerically same body before accepting other models.

3.2.4 The Historical Argument for Numerical Resurrection

History also rests on the side of the resurrection of the numerically same body, regardless of philosophical position (e.g., even substance dualists have held to its necessity).¹⁸⁷ The debates within theism haven't been whether the numerically same body is resurrected but how it is resurrected. It's *how* not *if* this particular body is raised to life.¹⁸⁸ Among the religions that emerged in the Middle East and Mediterranean basin only Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Zoroastrianism teach the resurrection of the body. Among these religions, only Christianity has defended the idea that the entire body is essential to the self, arguing that significant material continuity is essential to the survival of the body which is essential to the survival of the person.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ See Stephen T. Davis and Eric T. Yang, “Composition and the Will of God,” in *Paradise Understood: New Philosophical Essays about Heaven*, ed. T. Ryan Byerly and Eric J. Silverman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 213; Stephen T. Davis, *Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 50, 58.

¹⁸⁸ Trenton Merricks, “The Resurrection of the Body,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, ed. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 487.

¹⁸⁹ This is not to deny the fact that other religions indicated there was some level of material continuity required for personal identity but that Christianity consistently required more material continuity and dedicated far more theological and philosophical resources to the problem. See Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity*, 12–13.

Theologians as early as Irenaeus (130–c. 202) affirmed that personal identity in the resurrection required some material continuity.¹⁹⁰ For example, he says that our bodies are “deposited in the earth, and suffering decomposition there, shall rise at their appointed time, the Word of God granting them resurrection....”¹⁹¹ Irenaeus grounds our resurrection in the very bodies that are buried in the earth and decompose there. Consider also Thomas Aquinas (c.1225–1274) who says, “For a man to rise with numerical identity there must also be numerical identity in his essential parts. Therefore, if the body of the man who rises is not to be composed of the flesh and bones which now compose it, the man who rises will not be numerically the same man.”¹⁹² Whether one finds Thomas agreeable or not is irrelevant. The point is that vast swaths of the Christian church find him to be an authoritative and trustworthy guide—especially on matters of anthropology. This is especially true since Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical in 1879 which made Thomas *the* philosopher of choice followed by Pope Pius X’s expectation of Catholic professors to teach Thomism beginning in 1914.¹⁹³

Importantly, broadly subscribed to confessions of faith for Christians also require the resurrection of the very same body. While the Nicene and Apostles’ creed may only confess a generic bodily resurrection, confessions like the Belgic Confession, in article 37, state, “their spirits being joined and united with their own bodies in which they lived.” By linking resurrection to the bodies once lived in, this requires the same body. The Westminster confession similarly says in section 33.2, “...all the dead shall be raised up, with the selfsame bodies, and none other (although with different qualities), which shall be united again to their souls forever.” Westminster is explicit—the “selfsame” bodies will be resurrected and “none other.” Article IV of the Anglican Thirty-Nine articles says, “Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of Man’s nature.” The catechism of the Catholic Church in chapter 3 article 11 also confesses the general resurrection to be like Christ’s which requires the numerically same body. It also cites the Council of Lyons II (1272–1274) which says that “we believe in the true resurrection of this flesh that we now possess.” Hence, resurrection is not of some *other* body but this one we live in now. This is why Gospel writers like John placed so much emphasis on the physical wounds of Jesus after his death. As John 20:27 says of Jesus: “then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.’” The catechism echoes Romans 8:11 by saying our “mortal body will come to life again” implying the same body that died will rise. Therefore, if one is inclined to historical consensus, one should be inclined to the numerical identity of the resurrected body.

¹⁹⁰ Cartwright, “Soul and Body in Early Christianity: An Old and New Conundrum,” 175.

¹⁹¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Ex Fontibus, 2010), V.3.2.

¹⁹² Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles: Book Two: Creation*, 4.84.7.

¹⁹³ Thomas M. Ward, *Ordered by Love: An Introduction to John Duns Scotus* (Brooklyn: Angelico Press, 2022), 5–9, 33.

3.2.5 The Justice Argument for Numerical Resurrection

Another theological motivation for the numerical resurrection is that if the bodies of believers are made members of Christ's mystical body and become temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:6; 6:15), then the same bodies should be resurrected. Otherwise, as Turretin says, "it would follow that the members of Christ's body partly perish and temples of the Holy Spirit are destroyed and never restored."¹⁹⁴ The point here is that there is a degree of justice that necessitates the numerically identical body for resurrection. There is something inherently wrong and unjust if part of a member of Christ's body can be destroyed and never restored—even if re-created in a different fashion.

Maybe one could counter: what makes a body "mine" is that it belongs to me, not that it is a numerically identical hunk of matter. Then if the bodies of believers are temples of the Holy Spirit, isn't it fine for my (new, numerically distinct) resurrected body to be a temple of the Holy Spirit? The hunk of matter that was my body is no longer a temple of the Holy Spirit. But my body still is, because that's not my body anymore. And it *is* restored, because we're interested in what my body is, not what happens to a hunk of matter. Just like the different iterations of the temple in Jerusalem which was destroyed and re-built on several occasions, each new version is certainly numerically distinct and yet remains the restored temple! This seems like a fair rebuttal which would lead us to a battle of competing intuitions about what restoration is for human persons.

But the concept of justice also makes sense of divine judgment and the resurrection. If justice is to be meted out appropriately, it is necessary to have the same person *in all their fullness* to be judged accordingly. Intuitively it would be unjust to punish a person with a *different* body for deeds it never committed in that body or to reward a person for the same.¹⁹⁵ As 1 Corinthians 5:10 claims, we will all give account for the deeds "done in the body." God will put everything to right in the cosmos which includes the body.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, it is at least desirable to maintain the same body in the resurrection if possible.

3.2.6 The Wasteful Argument for Numerical Resurrection

A final argument in favor of the numerically identical resurrection body is simply that any alternative method would be rather wasteful. Doesn't it seem wasteful—or at least odd—to create a new body for the resurrection when you have the old one lying around? Given God's goodness and our intuitions about wastefulness, a case can be made that—if it is possible for God to resurrect the same body—he will. So, if there is a plausible theory of reassembly, it will happen this way based on God's character.

¹⁹⁴ Turretin, *IET*, 3:573.

¹⁹⁵ Strickland, "The Doctrine of 'The Resurrection of the Same Body' in Early Modern Thought," 164; Turretin, *IET*, 3:572.

¹⁹⁶ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2014), 142; Mugg and Turner, "Why a Bodily Resurrection?," 124, 126.

3.3 Problems with Numerical Resurrection

While I've attempted to make the modest case that resurrection as the ecumenical creeds, the Bible, and the Christian church understand it requires the numerically identical body, not everyone agrees. Some find “deadly” problems with the resurrection of the numerically identical body and seek to redefine resurrection to accommodate. What are the reasons for doing so? I see two primary problems that stem from the same challenge to the numerically identical body. The first is from Lynne Rudder Baker and is left mainly undiscussed in the philosophical literature. The second is from materialism in general and is codified in contemporary literature by Peter van Inwagen. The central challenge is this: how can identity be maintained if the numerically same body that dies is to be resurrected? On substance dualist assumptions, this problem never arises because personal identity is preserved by the persistence of the soul between death and resurrection. But if the same material body must be resurrected, even on substance dualist assumptions, nothing bridges the spatiotemporal gap between the body that perishes and the body that resurrects. So, even if the soul maintains personal identity through gaps, there is nothing to ensure the numerical identity of the body. Without such a bridge the “resurrected” body cannot be identical with the body that died. Substance dualism's solution offers no solace to the one committed to the necessity of the numerical identity of the resurrected body. Considerable ingenuity has been expended in the search for an answer to this question. Therefore, I discuss Baker's problems before examining van Inwagen's and offering my own novel solution based on van Inwagen's materialist metaphysics. If the motivations above are accurate, there must be a solution if the Christian doctrine of resurrection is to be coherent and not completely illogical.

3.3.1 The Imperishability Problem

Lynne Rudder Baker agrees that the body is necessary for resurrection (i.e., we cannot survive without a body, unlike versions of dualism that posit a soul that can exist apart from a body) but she thinks the body that dies need not be the one that is resurrected. We are free to be resurrected with a numerically distinct body. She claims that since a person's body continually changes throughout life and personal identity remains, we do not need the same body.¹⁹⁷ In fact, it is *impossible* for the same material body to be resurrected. So, she denies the definition of resurrection as presented above. The resurrected person only needs to be embodied in general, not with the numerically same body. She argues this because of what she finds in 1 Corinthians 15, which says in verses 35–44:

But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But God gives it a body as

¹⁹⁷ Baker, “Need a Christian Be a Mind/Body Dualist?,” 493.

he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

She focuses on the differences between the two “kinds” of bodies found in this text—pre-resurrection and post-resurrection, perishable and imperishable. There are numerous contrastive elements in this text, including perishable versus imperishable, dishonorable versus glory, weakness versus power, and natural versus spiritual. Further the Apostle says that bodies will be “changed” and “put on” various properties such as imperishability and immortality. He claims the pre-resurrection body is “not the body that is to be.” This is where Baker’s argument comes in. She focuses on the change from perishable to imperishable that the Apostle describes. Here is her exact argument:

1. The body Smith has now is perishable.
2. The body Smith will have in the resurrection is imperishable.
3. If x is perishable and y is imperishable, then x is not identical to y.
4. The body Smith has now is not identical to the body that Smith will have in the resurrection.¹⁹⁸

So, on her argument, the problem is that the pre-resurrection and post-resurrection bodies are not the same if 1 Corinthians 15 is true. If the pre-resurrection body is perishable but the post-resurrection body is imperishable, they are not the same. In fact, “you” cannot exist in the resurrection.¹⁹⁹ But why? Because Baker maintains that humans are essentially perishable. None naturally live forever. And the resurrection body is imperishable, essentially different. So, it appears based on 1 Corinthians 15, it would be impossible for Jesus—or anyone else—to have the same dead body resurrected if it is transformed in the process from perishable to imperishable.

But are premises 1-3 true? Premise 1 and 2 are uncontroversial based on 1 Corinthians 15. The pre-resurrection body is perishable, and the post-resurrection body is imperishable. One could deny premise 2 if

¹⁹⁸ Lynne Rudder Baker, “Constitutionalism,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, ed. Jonathan J. Loose, J. L. Menuge, and J. P. Moreland (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2018), 347.

¹⁹⁹ Lynne Rudder Baker, “Material Persons and the Doctrine of the Resurrection,” *Faith and Philosophy* 18, no. 2 (April 2001): 343.

they wanted to deny the validity of 1 Corinthians 15 and maintain the numerically same body for resurrection. But for the one committed to the truth of 1 Corinthians 15, premise 3 is the only vulnerable premise. Baker defends premise 3 as follows:

Can God not transform Smith's body that is perishable now into a body that is imperishable? Certainly, he can. But to do so is to effect a substantial change: Smith's new imperishable body would not be the same body as Smith's current perishable body. Why not? Perishability and imperishability are persistence conditions. Objects have their persistence conditions essentially: a single object cannot be perishable at one time and imperishable at another time.²⁰⁰

So, based on my reading of her formal argument alongside her explanations like the above quotation, Baker's argument is better explained as follows:

5. If object x has persistence condition y , then x has y essentially.
6. If object x has essential property y , then x cannot be identical to object z that lacks property y .
7. The persistence conditions of a perishable object are different from those of an imperishable object (e.g., perishable objects have y but imperishable objects lack y).
8. Therefore, perishable objects are not identical to imperishable objects. [5,6,7]
9. The resurrected body is imperishable while the pre-resurrected body is perishable.
10. Therefore, the resurrected body isn't identical to the pre-resurrected body. [8,9]

I think this clarifies where exactly Baker might run afoul with her argument. While the argument is sound, it is possible to reject either 5 or 7.

To consider the argument and its premises best, I need to clarify what is essential to an object and what counts as persistence conditions from the start. Essential properties are the most central, objective, and context-independent *de re* facts about these objects that cannot be lacked—whereas others are accidental or contingent and can be either lost or lacked.²⁰¹ Those properties that are essential are those that cannot be lacked in any possible world without the object ceasing to exist as itself. Those that are accidental are those that can be lacked and the object persists.²⁰² For example, imagine it is essential to Michael Jordan to be human but only accidental that he is the greatest basketball player. In no possible world could Michael Jordan exist and be something other than human—a frog, a tiger, or a hobbit. If Michael Jordan were to have these

²⁰⁰ Baker, "Constitutionalism," 347; Baker, "Persons and the Metaphysics of Resurrection," 342.

²⁰¹ L. A. Paul, "The Context of Essence," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 82, no. 1 (March 2004): 170.

²⁰² L. A. Paul, "In Defense of Essentialism," *Philosophical Perspectives* 20 (2006): 333.

properties, he would no longer be Michael Jordan. Therefore, if there is any possible world where Michael Jordan lacks a property, that property cannot be essential to Michael Jordan.

Persistence conditions largely track the essential and accidental properties distinction. Baker claims that persistence conditions “specify the changes that the thing could survive and the changes that would destroy the thing.”²⁰³ So, persistence conditions for a human are, quite literally, the conditions under which a human biologically persists.²⁰⁴ Imagine a maximally complete set of scenarios. Persistence conditions would determine whether an object survived each one. Would Edgar survive a 5-ton stone dropping on his head? Would Conner survive a nuclear blast? Would Brandon survive Manchester United winning the premier league? Would Edgar survive losing the property of having a beating heart? Being perishable means perishing in events like the 5-ton stone or the nuclear blast while being imperishable would mean persisting through those events or loss of properties.

3.3.1.1 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Imperishability

The first way to avoid Baker’s argument is by rejecting premise 7 and claiming there are two senses of imperishable. It can mean not subject to decay *or* cannot be destroyed. If God is omnipotent and humans are contingent beings in the sense that they are not immortal but able to cease existing, it’s possible for them to be destroyed. It makes much more sense that imperishability means not subject to decay instead. This is true, even more so, because many theologians have understood the “spiritual nature” of the resurrected body to not be a substantial or material change but to be “qualitative” in some sense.²⁰⁵ So the resurrection body being imperishable rather than perishable is an extrinsic change rather than intrinsic.²⁰⁶

The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic is fairly standard. Intrinsic properties are those an object has independently from everything else, whereas extrinsic are those dependent on things external to itself.²⁰⁷ In other words, an intrinsic property is a property held in virtue of the way we are and an extrinsic property is held in virtue of the way we interact with the world. So, extrinsic properties would be those like being an uncle, being in debt, being 10 miles from London, etc. Whereas intrinsic properties are those like internal structure, charge, or being circular.²⁰⁸

If persistence conditions are intrinsic and imperishability is an extrinsic property, then someone could become imperishable, or even become perishable, without persistence conditions changing at all. For

²⁰³ Baker, “Material Persons and the Doctrine of the Resurrection,” 151.

²⁰⁴ While there is some debate as to whether psychological persistence matters, I take biological persistence to be the point of Baker’s argument, and, therefore only consider it.

²⁰⁵ Turretin, *IET*, 3:573.

²⁰⁶ Mugg and Turner, “Why a Bodily Resurrection?,” 129–30; Turretin, *IET*, 3:573.

²⁰⁷ Ross P. Cameron, “Intrinsic and Extrinsic Properties,” in *The Routledge Companion to Metaphysics*, ed. Robin Le Poidevin et al. (London: Routledge, 2009), 265.

²⁰⁸ David Lewis, “Extrinsic Properties,” *Philosophical Studies* 44, no. 2 (September 1983): 197.

example, consider the pre-resurrection and post-resurrection body of a person. If imperishability is extrinsic then both maintain the same persistence conditions, being that they can't survive, say, a certain cellular degradation or being smashed by a 5-ton stone. Their persistence conditions align. What differs in the resurrection body is not the persistence condition but that the body no longer suffers such degradation or being crushed by 5-ton stones. In the resurrected world, there is no state of affairs where cellular degradation plagues the body or where 5-ton stones crush. So, imperishability and perishability do not have different persistence conditions and thus premise 6 can be denied. The change between the two bodies is extrinsic and not intrinsic.

In a co-authored essay, philosophers J. T. Turner and Joshua Mugg defend this very notion against Baker and assume it is sufficient to parry Baker's worry. But this argument alone does not appear to do sufficient justice to the claim in 1 Corinthians 15 that the body is *changed*. If I relegate all change to the external environment, why does the Apostle claim the body is transformed? He doesn't say that the body enters a paradise free from corruption, therefore we can exist without perishing. His claim is that the body is given new properties, one of them being imperishability. This sounds like an intrinsic change and not just extrinsic. Turner and Mugg hang their argument on the fact that the resurrected bodies "spiritual" character relates not to material constitution but to functional power. Indeed, major biblical scholars agree with their conclusion that "the spiritual body is not a body made of spirit, but a body powered by the Spirit."²⁰⁹ If this is true, Baker's entire argument is a nonstarter since the material body remains unchanged. But Baker realizes this and thinks 1 Corinthians 15 "clearly suggests" resurrection bodies are not identical to earthly bodies precisely because the "spiritual" change is real material change.²¹⁰ For example, consider Jesus's resurrected body. He walks through walls, he suddenly appears and vanishes, and he is unrecognizable at times. If Jesus is the model of resurrection in general and his body experiences changes like this—changes that appear to be intrinsic—why would we not connect this to the spiritual nature of the resurrected body and assume this happens for us too?²¹¹

3.3.1.2 *Accidental Persistence Conditions*

There is a further way to avoid Baker's argument. One could reject premise 5 and that persistence conditions are essential to objects. One could simply deny essentialism altogether and solve this problem, but this is a steep price to pay given its widespread intuitive support. I think a more plausible route is to argue that imperishability and perishability aren't essential to objects at all. For example, imagine a clay statue. It has the persistence conditions of being unable to withstand being crushed by a hammer. Given every scenario this clay statue could experience, it would be crushed by a hammer. But what if that same clay statue was

²⁰⁹ Mugg and Turner, "Why a Bodily Resurrection?," 126.

²¹⁰ Baker, "Material Persons and the Doctrine of the Resurrection," 342.

²¹¹ Baker, "Material Persons and the Doctrine of the Resurrection," 344.

reinforced with new material that fortified its material and thus “changed” its persistence conditions since it now could withstand the crushing blow of a hammer? In the same way, imperishability could be a fortification to the human organism that changes its ordinary persistence conditions while not changing its identity.

For example, consider also comic heroes such as Wolverine or Spider-man. Before their transformation, being shot with an assault rifle would mean certain death. But after their transformation they survive. Their original body had the persistence conditions that meant they would die from being shot. Only after being fortified did their body have the ability to survive. So, before Spider-man was bitten by the chemically engineered spider, every scenario where he was shot by a rifle would mean death. But after being bitten, he survives being shot. And it is not something external to him that preserves his life, it is his own body that causes persistence. There is no longer a scenario where he dies from this act. Since he was never given a numerically distinct body, the same body, materially and causally, remains. This may be contentious to some that think this would result in a numerically distinct body as it is the start of something new, but if we assume a standard account of numerical identity such as immanent causal connection or otherwise (I will develop these in more detail in a following section), it is appropriate.

Maybe fictional superheroes don’t fully convince. Fortunately, there are examples of internal change in real life. Consider the case of vaccines. Before the polio vaccine arrived, polio could very well lead to death. But for those with the vaccine, they wouldn’t die. Their persistence conditions changed. Under no circumstance would they die from polio after having the vaccine. Yet their body remains numerically the same. Consider also the seedling and the mature oak tree. The seed that becomes the oak tree is identical to the oak tree—it just changes over time. When the tree was a seedling it was vulnerable to various scenarios that would destroy it but not the oak tree. As a seedling it was possible for a hungry bird or squirrel to eat the seed, digesting and destroying it. But as a mature oak tree the bird and squirrel no longer can destroy the tree by eating and digesting it. The persistence condition is not the same.

Even so, persistence conditions are usually framed in terms of which properties an entity can lose (or gain) and remain the same entity, rather than which events they can undergo and survive. Therefore, it’s less clear on the first understanding of persistence conditions that a vaccinated person changes in persistence conditions. The problem at this point is that any example will likely be trivial (e.g., I can survive going from having the property “having a full head of hair” to having the property “balding and losing my hair”) or beg the question.

Consider finally the fact that Baker herself admits that persistence conditions change for the same subject and are thus not essential. The first-person perspective, which is the person for Baker, changes persistence

conditions from pre-resurrection to post-resurrection. This is so because the person pre-resurrection has an imperishable body and post-resurrection has an imperishable body. The person's persistence changes since the person was once perishable but is now imperishable—the numerically identical person. If this is true, perishability and imperishability cannot be “essential” for the person. Only things that cannot ever change or be lost are essential. So, it seems that the person is conditionally perishable rather than essentially. And if this is true, Baker's premise 5 is faulty which allows one to deny her overall argument and affirm the sameness of the resurrected body even with changes from perishability to imperishability.

3.3.2 The Destruction Problem²¹²

Besides Baker's imperishability argument, there remains a second problem for the necessity of the same body for resurrection. The problem is as follows: Given the fact that dead bodies decay and are eventually destroyed, resurrection appears *prima facie* impossible for the same body of the average person who dies, is buried, and rots for thousands of years. Mark Johnston goes so far as to say that Christian hope in the resurrection “stands or falls with the Platonic legacy of the immaterial soul” since materialism has no resources to maintain any semblance of identity.²¹³ This problem is not new or unique but is well articulated by Peter van Inwagen. In fact, few articles on the Christian doctrine of bodily resurrection have been as influential as his short piece on the possibility of resurrection via simulacrum from 1978. Yet it has been regularly condemned for its overall implausibility.²¹⁴ This paper argues that van Inwagen's thesis has been unfairly criticized and remains a live and salutary option. However, for the sake of clarity, such a defense of van Inwagen is intentionally broad in nature. I do not defend resurrection by simulacrum as *the* way that God resurrects. Rather, I argue that it is a far more reasonable model than critics suggest. I also argue that it maintains various desiderata about the resurrection that are important to Christians—at least those committed to the resurrection of the “self-same” body—better than alternative models.²¹⁵

To defend my thesis, I begin by summarizing the metaphysics of the simulacrum theory of the resurrection alongside the motivation for such a theory. Next, I challenge the four main criticisms against the van Inwagen styled simulacrum model. First, I argue that while van Inwagen's model may appear unnecessary or irrelevant

²¹² This section contains a lightly edited version of the following essay: Jordan L. Steffaniak, “Resurrecting van Inwagen's Simulacrum: A Defense,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 93, no. 3 (June 2023): 211–25, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11153-023-09861-6>.

²¹³ Mark Johnston, *Surviving Death* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 127.

²¹⁴ See for example: Hud Hudson, *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 93, 181; Stephen T. Davis, “Physicalism and Resurrection,” in *Soul, Body, and Survival: Essays on the Metaphysics of Human Persons*, ed. Kevin Corcoran (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 247; Timothy O'Connor and Jonathan D. Jacobs, “Emergent Individuals and the Resurrection,” *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 2, no. 2 (2009): 69–70; William Hasker, “Materialism and the Resurrection: Are the Prospects Improving?,” *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 3 (2011): 85; Turner, *On the Resurrection of the Dead*, 83–84; Hud Hudson, “The Resurrection and Hypertime,” in *Paradise Understood: New Philosophical Essays about Heaven*, ed. T. Ryan Byerly and Eric J. Silverman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 266.

²¹⁵ See the confessional consensus on such a view of the resurrection in numerous Protestant confessions such as the Westminster Confession of Faith 32.2, The Second London Confession of Faith 31.2, and The Savoy Declaration 31.2

for those that reject his commitment to materialism about human persons an account *like* his is necessary for those that desire to maintain the traditional metaphysics of resurrection (e.g., the resurrection of the “self-same” or numerically identical body). Therefore, his model ought to be of great interest to *all* Christian theologians and philosophers. Second, I rebuff the objection that his model implicates God in mass deception or irreverence for the dead. Third, I reject the idea that van Inwagen’s model is analogous to the implausibility of young earth creationism and its required claims like dinosaur bones being given the appearance of age. Fourth, I deny that his model is impossible for scenarios where someone is simultaneously killed and destroyed, such as in nuclear blasts. In sum, philosophers and theologians should avoid regarding the simulacrum resurrection as a silly hypothesis and take it far more seriously. In conclusion, I offer one final criticism not found in the literature before examining other models’ solution to the problem of resurrection. I conclude that even if van Inwagen’s theory is false in the superficial sense of getting the details of the resurrection wrong, its metaphysical commitments and motivations are shared by those seeking the resurrection of the self-same body.

3.3.2.1 Introducing the Simulacrum Thesis

Before I summarize the problems posed to van Inwagen’s model it is important to summarize his original model for proper context. He originally wrote his short paper as a “just so” story for how resurrection might be possible for a materialist about human persons. In it he attempts to prove why traditional reassembly models are insufficient for accounts of resurrection before offering his own hypothesis for how it might happen given a proper account of our physical makeup.

3.3.2.2 The Immanent Causation Criterion for Persistence

Traditionally, Christians have sought to affirm that persons survive death through eventual resurrection. There is an assumption that there is some sort of criterion for identity that guarantees such persistence between death and resurrection. Oftentimes this has been explained through models of resurrection via material reassembly. God miraculously gathers all the scattered material parts of each person’s last stage of existence (or whatever stage is proper for resurrection) and orders them back together. Once complete, the same person that died is now alive. It is the same person that receives either judgment or reward in the beatific vision. But if materialism is true about human persons and given certain facts about how the present age works, many would, of necessity, be unable to survive to the afterlife.²¹⁶ The reason for this is because no matter how God reassembles our bodies, if materialism is true, the same material constitution alone does not preserve identity beyond death.

²¹⁶ Inwagen, “The Possibility of Resurrection,” 116.

Van Inwagen provides an example to ground this intuition. He asks us to imagine a scenario about a manuscript that had been burned into non-existence in 457 and is miraculously reassembled in 458 by God's omnipotence. Van Inwagen argues this is *not* the same manuscript—even if reassembled with the exact same material simples that previously composed it. Why? Because the manuscript's existence is composed not as the result of the original author's activity but of God's.²¹⁷

Van Inwagen doesn't specifically name the type of criterion for identity that he is using, but I take it that it is a species of "immanent causation." Call it the immanent causal criterion. Such a criterion does not rely solely on spatiotemporal continuity for persistence. Instead, it relies on certain causal connections that have enough unity to be considered a single persisting whole.²¹⁸ These causal connections are known as immanent causation which is causation where the cause *and* effect are attributed to the same constituent ²¹⁹. For example, how John is at *t1* causes him to be a certain way at *t2* (which is not like *intentional agential* causation. The sorts of cause-effect pairs in immanent causation cases won't be the sorts of things that John *intentionally* brings about, since John's persistence through time is not under his intentional, volitional control). So, for an object to persist as a whole the causality must remain "confined" to the particular object.²²⁰ For example again, a persisting whole like John is only the same John at *t1* as he is at *t2* if the way John is intrinsically at *t2* is at least in part caused by the way he was at *t1*.²²¹ This contrasts with other sorts of causation like "transeunt causation" which is causation wherein the cause and the effect refer to *different* constituents. For transeunt causation the causal agent affects something else "outside" itself.²²² For example, when John breathes on his coffee to cool it, the cause of breathing affects John's coffee which is transeunt causation because the cause and effect refer to different constituents.

Given the immanent causal criterion, van Inwagen's claim that Augustine's manuscript isn't identical in 458 is true because God's action to reassemble it doesn't include the proper causal connections which are impossible to re-create after such a period of time. The manuscript must continue to cause its own existence *by itself*. Each stage of existence must be causally responsible for the previous.²²³ This doesn't mean that the object must be *solely* responsible for its own causal self-maintenance, only that it is *part* of the process. There must be some causal dependence on the previous stage where the cause and effect refer to the same persisting whole.²²⁴ After all, in cases of human organisms, which we want to take as persisting wholes, there

²¹⁷ Inwagen, "The Possibility of Resurrection," 118.

²¹⁸ Dean Zimmerman, "Immanent Causation," *Philosophical Perspectives* 11 (1997): 435.

²¹⁹ Zimmerman, "Immanent Causation," 433.

²²⁰ D. M. Armstrong, *A World of States of Affairs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 73.

²²¹ Zimmerman, "Immanent Causation," 445.

²²² Eric T. Olson, "Immanent Causation and Life After Death," in *Personal Identity and Resurrection: How Do We Survive Our Death?*, ed. Georg Gasser (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 56.

²²³ Hasker, "Materialism and the Resurrection: Are the Prospects Improving?," 83; O'Connor and Jacobs, "Emergent Individuals and the Resurrection," 71, 84; Johnston, *Surviving Death*, 95.

²²⁴ Zimmerman, "Immanent Causation," 435.

are doctors, drugs, and life-support machines that cause continued self-maintenance in a limited fashion for humans. But all that is necessary for persistence is that the earlier intrinsic properties of the whole at *t1* are causally relevant for it at *t2*. In the case of Augustine's manuscript, the causal connection no longer is relevantly connected to the previous stage of existence. Therefore, as Van Inwagen claims, the "causal chain has been irrevocably broken."²²⁵ It is no longer Augustine's original manuscript. Since the atoms occupy their arrangement because of God and "not because of the operation of the natural processes that, taken collectively, were the life" it is a qualitatively identical duplicate.²²⁶

For those who fail to find this wholly intuitive, van Inwagen then asks us to imagine a modern scenario. Say a father accidentally knocks over his daughter's tower of blocks. He then reassembles it the same. It is identical in its arrangement. Later that day someone asks whether that is his daughter's tower of blocks. The father replies: "No, since I reassembled it for her. But it's certainly the same. It's just a duplicate. Just don't tell my daughter. She won't know the difference." The father here assumes that the tower of blocks is numerically distinct though qualitatively identical because its causal self-maintenance was interrupted the moment he destroyed it and re-created it. Therefore, if this is true for blocks, so much more for humans. God cannot reassemble our material parts in the resurrection and expect us to remain identical since this violates the necessity of immanent causation (at least if we are material beings and need those material bits to stay the same person). Numerical identity requires an immanent causal connection that is at least partially self-maintained and continuous with the previous. Any violation of this destroys identity.²²⁷ While reassembly offers a certain sort of connection it is not sufficient—it needs some immanent causation.²²⁸

Now we come again to the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. If it is true in these other scenarios that immanent causation is necessary for identity, and therefore, is necessary for human persons as well, there appears to be an obvious problem. Given the fact that dead bodies decay and are eventually destroyed, resurrection appears *prima facie* impossible for the same body of the average person who dies, is buried, and rots for thousands of years. It is important to include the "rots for thousands of years" because even a corpse can continue to be immanently causally related to the next stage. Van Inwagen says as much, "Even when I become a corpse—provided I decay slowly and am not, say, cremated—the atoms that compose me will occupy the positions relative to one another that they do *largely* because of the processes of life that *used* to go on within me: or this will be the case for at least some short period."²²⁹ But if a person is totally destroyed—by annihilation or disintegration over time—it is impossible for the same person to exist

²²⁵ Inwagen, "The Possibility of Resurrection," 119.

²²⁶ Inwagen, "The Possibility of Resurrection," 119.

²²⁷ Inwagen, "The Possibility of Resurrection," 116–18; David B. Hershenov, "Van Inwagen, Zimmerman, and the Materialist Conception of Resurrection," *Religious Studies* 38, no. 4 (2002): 457.

²²⁸ Hasker, "Materialism and the Resurrection: Are the Prospects Improving?," 84.

²²⁹ Inwagen, "The Possibility of Resurrection," 119.

again.²³⁰ Eric Olson dubs this the “irreversibility principle.” There is a point at which there is no going back to the *same* person. That person ceases to exist forever and there is nothing that could change it.²³¹ But the standard model of resurrection via reassembly appears to assume that material continuity alone is sufficient for my body to be identical in the resurrection. And as van Inwagen argues, if bare reassembly is sufficient for resurrecting me, it is possible for God to arrange all of the material simples that constituted me at 10 years old as well as all the material simples that constituted me at 30 years old. But this is plainly impossible. God cannot resurrect two identical iterations of me and cause them to exist independently.²³² Therefore, materialists like van Inwagen have argued that for an object to be numerically identical at different times in its lifespan it is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition that it is immanently causally inter-related.

At this point we are left with the problem van Inwagen seeks to avoid if immanent causation is necessary for resurrection. Let’s spell it out:

11. Necessarily, if x is identical to y then there is an immanent causal connection between x and y .
12. Necessarily, if x ceases to be at time t then x is not immanently causally connected to anything that exists after time t .
13. Therefore, necessarily, if x ceases to be at time t then there is nothing after time t that is numerically identical to x .

So, by necessity, God cannot resurrect my body if it rots for thousands of years or is annihilated since it is no longer immanently causally connected. Certainly, someone could deny that a relation of immanent causal connection is necessary for a whole to persist to avoid the unsavory conclusion. Or maybe there is *no* criterion for identity at all. It is simply a primitive concept. But those committed to the resurrection of the “self-same” body, whether materialists or dualists, need some sort of immanent causation to maintain any genuine sense of persisting identity (as I will defend further).

3.3.2.3 *The Resurrection via Simulacrum*

Not all hope is lost given the problem between resurrection and the necessity of immanent causation. Van Inwagen offers what he considers to be a plausible way for God to maintain that someone is identical pre- and post-resurrection. What if God, right at the moment of death, steals away your corpse and replaces it with a simulacrum which is what rots here on earth and is ultimately destroyed, all while keeping your actual body safe until the “resurrection”? Or maybe he only steals away “the core person”—say, for instance, the brain. The details need not matter (e.g., it could be that there is but one tiny, microscopic part of the brain

²³⁰ Inwagen, “The Possibility of Resurrection,” 118.

²³¹ Olson, “Immanent Causation and Life After Death,” 51–53.

²³² Inwagen, “The Possibility of Resurrection,” 120.

stem that God steals away).²³³ The point is, God safeguards whatever part of you that is necessary and sufficient for an immanent causal connection to continue for your life.²³⁴ While we may think that the natural course for our bodies is to disintegrate into the earth and be recycled into other lives after death, this is *not* what happens. That decomposing body is just a duplicate (or the largely now amputated portion of your body), while the important part of your body—and what maintains your identity—is kept somewhere else. If true, the challenge of death and its eventual elimination of an immanent causal connection is removed.

3.3.2.3.1 Defending Van Inwagen

There have been at least four main objections leveled against van Inwagen's proposal. First, van Inwagen's model is wholly irrelevant since it is unnecessary if dualism is accepted and the soul preserves identity over time full-stop. There is no need for sophisticated accounts of immanent causation. Second, the idea that God would abduct our bodies at the moment of our death and replace them with faux duplicates wherein our family and friends would proceed to be duped into grieving over a heap of matter arranged as a corpse lookalike seems like it would implicate God in mass deception. Further, such a practice appears to make our typical burial practices obsolete and ultimately irreverent since it's merely a dummy in the ground. Third, resurrection by simulacrum is implausible. Like those that ask us to believe God created dinosaur bones with the appearance of age, asking us to believe that God replaces every single dead body with a simulacrum is beyond incredible. Fourth, resurrection by simulacrum is impossible in cases of annihilation. If a person is annihilated, then there is no time for God to swap bodies after death. The next four sections provide defeaters to each of these objections in turn.

3.3.2.3.2 Motivating Simulacrum for Everyone

The first objection to van Inwagen is that his theory is unnecessary given alternative metaphysical accounts of the human person. For example, if someone is a dualist and thinks an immaterial soul is the bearer of personal identity, they can jettison the necessity of immanent causation for bodies. While each stage of the soul remains connected by such causal relations the body can be destroyed and the person's identity will continue to persist. This renders van Inwagen's simulacrum account unnecessary since there is no need for one's body to remain immanently causally interrelated after death. But those that affirm the traditional doctrine of the resurrection of the dead shouldn't dismiss van Inwagen's thesis so hastily. While the resurrection of the dead generates no shortage of metaphysical puzzles, and theories abound as to the precise nature of this divine miracle, there remains a strong consensus of the resurrection of the "self-same" body

²³³ It is important to keep this in mind as some have argued against van Inwagen on the grounds that mass body swapping would be rather obvious. For example, in cases where people have died with radioactive dye in their organs, one would expect "remarkable" studies being published wherein the radioactive dye suddenly disappears. But this is to assume God must "snatch" entire bodies when that is not essential to van Inwagen's model. See: Johnston, *Surviving Death*, 97–98.

²³⁴ Inwagen, "The Possibility of Resurrection," 121.

and none other.²³⁵ In other words, resurrection for these Christians, requires the numerically identical body—i.e., the self-same body. And if the metaphysics of resurrection requires such a story, no matter what one thinks about van Inwagen’s own metaphysics, they ought to be interested in his theory of resurrection given that they are already committed to a similar means of resurrection. They too must avoid problems of complete annihilation, cannibalism, and more.

But maybe there is a query about the consensus and meaning of the resurrection of the “self-same” body. Maybe it’s *not* the consensus position or maybe it means something besides having the numerically identical body. But as described in the opening of this chapter, there *is* historical consensus on this matter and strong theological and philosophical reason to accept that resurrection means the rising of the numerically identical body. Even if this were a minority position, proving the possibility of a numerically identical body being resurrection leaves the theological/metaphysical options open in a way that is philosophically interesting.

Therefore, given the consensus and understanding of the resurrection of the “self-same” body, even if one rejects van Inwagen’s metaphysics of human persons and affirms something far different like dualism, they still need his metaphysics of resurrection for the “self-same” body to remain identical. So, van Inwagen’s theory turns out to be highly relevant even if we turn out to have a very different ontology of human persons.

3.3.2.3.3 Overcoming the Mass Deception Objection

A second objection is that while van Inwagen’s theory might theoretically work—God certainly *could* do this since he is omnipotent and there is nothing logically impossible about this—it seems to implicate God in mass deception. Since deception is impossible for God, especially on a mass scale, this can’t be a solution. This is the seeming death knell for van Inwagen’s proposal throughout the philosophical literature. But why is it deceptive? Most who have claimed this have simply asserted it rather than argued it. Consider some examples. Timothy O’Connor and Jonathan D. Jacobs dismiss it with one sentence: “Alas, this scenario can easily seem a fantastic deception.”²³⁶ Hud Hudson offers one sentence about the worry and then moves on as well: “God is constantly engaged in intricate deception of the faithful.”²³⁷ William Hasker provides a more detailed rejection than others but it remains a dismissal on the grounds that it is “massive deception.”²³⁸ Mark Johnston similarly follows Hasker, thinking of Van Inwagen’s God as a “deceiving trickster” that is the “manager of a secret, but vast, cryonics unit.”²³⁹ None of them offer *arguments* for why it is deceptive. It is just intuitively deceptive. Van Inwagen’s theory is not to be taken seriously.

²³⁵ See for example: Strickland, “The Doctrine of ‘The Resurrection of the Same Body’ in Early Modern Thought.”

²³⁶ O’Connor and Jacobs, “Emergent Individuals and the Resurrection,” 69–70.

²³⁷ Hudson, “The Resurrection and Hypertime,” 266.

²³⁸ Hasker, “Materialism and the Resurrection: Are the Prospects Improving?,” 85.

²³⁹ Johnston, *Surviving Death*, 97.

It appears the underlying assumption is this: If God were to swap out our bodies with a simulacrum at death, it would be regularly and widely deceptive since God sets up each and every funeral so that it looks as if the teleportation hasn't happened. Therefore, all of humanity grieves over what they *thought* was the same person but the body they grieved over was only a duplicate body. These loved ones will bury faux copies of their beloveds despite their belief that it *is* their beloved. This—causing mass deception for normal death and burial expectations—is wrong. While a few deceptions here and there could be explained away, deception on such a regular and mass scale cannot be ignored. Similarly, if someone died and their spouse sought to keep their wedding ring as a token of remembrance, yet it was replaced with a duplicate before being delivered to the living spouse, it is intuitive that this is wrong.

There are at least two reasons to believe that deception is not taking place and that there is a disanalogy between the ring case and the resurrection case. First, consider those who affirm substance dualism. If substance dualism is true, then those grieving over dead bodies already believe the body in the grave is not their beloved whom they loved in this life. Therefore, if those that seek to discredit van Inwagen's approach with this criticism are largely dualists then they *already* assume what is true on van Inwagen's theory—the body in the grave *isn't* the person who lived this life. Therefore, if materialism turns out to be true and God's mechanism for resurrection is van Inwagen's simulacrum thesis, substance dualists won't actually be deceived since they already believe that isn't their mother or father in the casket. They are somewhere else because they are identical to their soul.

Since I am considering the Christian doctrine of resurrection it is quite relevant that many suggest that dualism—oftentimes substance dualism—is the “default position of the church.”²⁴⁰ If it is the default position, then the charge of mass deception is faulty. And beyond the Christian church, outside the halls of academia, dualism remains a popular folk belief. While its influence continues to wane, it's certainly not rare to find those that intuitively believe in a soul. It remains in the popular imagination, even displayed in popular films such as *Doctor Strange* and cartoons like *Tom and Jerry* wherein human persons and animals are capable of existing apart from their bodies in mysteriously ghostly non-bodily states. Therefore, I don't see why God would promulgate *mass* deception. Maybe he would deceive all the materialists since they would think that the corpse literally is their beloved despite God having replaced it with a duplicate. But he wouldn't deceive the substance dualists since they *already* assume the corpse isn't the person. Therefore, this objection fails because many Christians are substance dualists, and therefore they already don't think it's the body anyhow.

Certainly, each substance dualist would get the details wrong about the resurrection, but that would be true if *any* version of materialism was true. And no one thinks God is committing mass deception if substance

²⁴⁰ Joshua R. Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 2.

dualism turns out to be false. Our having correct beliefs is not one of God's moral responsibilities. Just because people thought the sun revolved around the earth for thousands of years because of their location and lack of scientific progress doesn't mean God *deceived* them into thinking that. Similarly, if it turns out that substance dualism is true, then it doesn't mean that God *deceived* the growing number of materialists since the cutting-edge science of the day appears to indicate it is true. Therefore, it is a hefty charge without sufficient justification to claim God is in a project of mass deception on van Inwagen's model. God never committed to promising we would have correct beliefs about everything—especially the afterlife.

Second, if God only takes the brain (or maybe he takes some sub-atomic particle and that's all that's necessary), then the body that remains *isn't* a complete duplicate. In fact, it is mostly the original corpse, minus whatever part God needed to take. Then it wouldn't be a case of deception since those grieving *would* be grieving over mostly the same body as their beloved. So, it doesn't seem that God deceives the world in any sinister way if this is his mode of resurrection.

Third, even if it were mass deception that God were committing, one would need to assume a sort of deontological notion of ethics for this to implicate God in anything sinister. If one rejects this vision of the ethical life it seems rather easy to understand mass deception in this case as a banal act serving the greater good or some other virtuous end.

I should note that William Hasker also questions our reverence toward the remains in the grave if it turns out to only be a duplicate.²⁴¹ But, again, substance dualists don't think the remains in the grave are their beloved. Yet they continue to treat the corpse with respect and dignity. Therefore, there is no reason that a simulacrum entails disrespect. Some additional controversial premise would be required to make this claim.

3.3.2.3.4 Overcoming the Dinosaur Bone Objection

The third objection comes from Dean Zimmerman in brief passing. He finds the model "less than satisfying." He thinks that just as God *could* have created the world 6,000 years ago and given dinosaur bones the appearance of age, God *could* resurrect via a simulacrum. But since giving dinosaur bones the appearance of age is implausible so is resurrection by simulacrum.²⁴² The main concern is this: if we permit the idea that God resurrects by simulacrum then nothing will prohibit us from thinking even zanier things, like God creating the world a mere 6,000 years ago and giving dinosaur bones the appearance of age. If these beliefs were true (dinosaur bones and simulacrum bodies), then our understanding of science and other disciplines like paleontology and archaeology would be severely impaired given that no empirical testing would ever confirm that the corpse is a duplicate or that dinosaur bones are a mere 6,000 years old. So, Zimmerman

²⁴¹ Hasker, "Materialism and the Resurrection: Are the Prospects Improving?," 85.

²⁴² Zimmerman, "The Compatibility of Materialism and Survival: The Falling Elevator Model," 196.

wants a model of resurrection that doesn't require us to believe anything funky about the world *as it is now or as it has been*. Corpses in the ground ought to remain corpses that were once people, instead of turning into a mere simulacrum.

There are several ways to avoid this objection. First, if van Inwagen's theory is cut down to not entail entirely new qualitative duplicates but merely a small section of the brain or brain stem, the oddness of the view is significantly abated. Instead of thinking that God is whisking away entire bodies and storing them somewhere in another dimension, he is only taking very small portions and preserving them. It's not unakin to the language of Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:37 where the body is but a "bare kernel." I take it that such a story would be like revising Zimmerman's parallel story of dinosaur bones to mean that God *could* have created the world 600,000 years ago instead of 6,000 years. Maybe that's not the right proportion. It could be 6,000,000 or 60,000 instead. But the point is that such a view of creation would no longer be the same level of "less than satisfying." While it would still require us to believe something odd about the world it would no longer stretch science to the same degree that it once did. While the dinosaur bones may still look older than they are, they at least would be closer to their correct age. Similarly, suggesting that God only replaces a small portion of the body makes it less implausible because empirical testing of the corpse in the ground *would* coincide with reality. The body in the ground *was* the person. All that was taken was a microscope portion, and what are a few microscopic bits of organic matter among friends?

Second, while it's true that strange beliefs are not an epistemic virtue—especially those that might require major revisions to science—if the strange beliefs are given other factors of epistemic weight, they can become more plausible. For example, it is standard to assume that epistemic justification is not an all or nothing affair. It comes in degrees. So, in this case, there is a greater inductive probability of van Inwagen's simulacrum theory *if* there are other factors which make it more likely. Traditionally there are several forms of probability but inductive probability is especially relevant in this case since it is the measure of the extent to which one proposition makes another proposition more likely.²⁴³ For example, take general relativity. You can point to how it explains time dilation, the perihelion shift of mercury, gravitational lensing, etc. And this seems to render the theory more likely to be true than if you just consider any one of them. So, it stands to reason that multiple distinct lines of justification would increase one's justification in the proposition more than any one taken by itself. There are obvious exceptions to the rule here. Two deductive proofs of the same theorem in math don't increase the justification above just having one proof. But if we're talking about evidential forms of justification that are short of proofs that establish their conclusions with certainty, I think it is natural to say there is a cumulative effect.

²⁴³ Richard Swinburne, *Epistemic Justification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 62.

Given such cumulative accounts of justification, even if van Inwagen's theory needs God to be stealing away entire human bodies around the clock, if there are biblical texts that can plausibly be interpreted to give warrant for abnormal metaphysical beliefs about the afterlife then such a belief should not be ostracized by Zimmerman. Therefore, the simulacrum resurrection is relevantly disanalogous from the dinosaur bone analogy because if there were biblical passages saying "Lo! God planted dinosaur bones in the ground and decreed 'Let the unbelievers judge these to be records of a past that never was!'" then Christians *would* be justified in believing the dinosaur bones theory. But there are no such passages. So, here is the distinction: there *are* passages that have reasonable interpretations bearing out the simulacrum theory. So, Christians *can* believe Van Inwagen's theory, even if they don't believe the dinosaur bones theory.

Consider accounts like Luke 16:19–31. It is a parable from Jesus that recounts the death of the "rich man" and Lazarus. They die and are found in opposite locations—Hades and Abraham's bosom. The story is before the final resurrection of the dead. This much is clear from the fact that the rich man pleads with Abraham to warn his brothers of Hades while they are on earth and Abraham chides him that they wouldn't listen even if someone did rise from the dead. What is interesting about the narrative is that Abraham, the rich man, and Lazarus all exist in an embodied state—or, at least a state that allows for some embodied actions. For example, the rich man asks for Lazarus to dip his finger in water to cool his tongue (Luke 16:24). The passage notes explicitly that the rich man "died and was buried" and Lazarus "was carried by the angels to Abraham's side" (Luke 16:22). Therefore, the text assumes that in the intermediate state they have bodies, and the body that Lazarus possesses seems to be the same one that died on earth.

It is true that most contemporary interpreters understand this story to be a metaphor and not a metaphysical blueprint for the afterlife. Even if it were a normal teaching about the afterlife, the Bible is rarely straightforward about metaphysics. But given the assumptions required for such a state to exist, which Christians generally want to affirm (at least an intermediate state with persons), it seems van Inwagen's theory would become far less implausible since such a theory would naturally fit with Luke 16, especially if it any carried literal truth about the nature of the afterlife. Surely, after all, the *entire* parable isn't completely unrelated to reality. Without a van Inwagen styled resurrection, how else could Lazarus have his body that was carried by the angels in the afterlife but before the resurrection? On van Inwagen's account there is a straightforward story. The angels quite *literally* carry him at his death to the afterlife (16:22). Therefore, a literal reading of Luke 16 fits naturally with van Inwagen's simulacrum thesis.

3.3.2.3.5 Overcoming the Instant Annihilation Objection

The final objection comes from Omar Fakhri. He argues that God could not resurrect people via the simulacrum method in cases where human organisms are instantly destroyed.²⁴⁴ If my death is instantaneous with my complete destruction via something like an atomic bomb, then there is no time for God to swap out my body with a simulacrum. God would have to swap my body *before* my death since there would be no body to swap after its atoms were dispersed from the nuclear blast and any trace of immanent causal connection destroyed. This is problematic because it denies Scripture texts like 1 Corinthians 15:22 that claim that we all die. If we are teleported away *before* we die, then we would *not* die. If true, van Inwagen's solution would fail to save anyone killed by a nuclear blast.²⁴⁵ And since atomic bombs *have* killed thousands of people already, no objection can be made that God will prevent such a scenario by his omnipotence. It's happened. Therefore, van Inwagen's theory either means anyone killed in this way will never be resurrected or his theory is false.

But while Fakhri's example is intuitively persuasive, there is sound empirical evidence that indicates Fakhri's understanding of atomic bombs is wrong. In a lengthy report by the United States Department of Defense and Department of Energy on the effects of nuclear weapons, they show through painstaking testing and research that the cause of death from nuclear bombs is *not* annihilation.²⁴⁶ In other words, a nuclear bomb does not annihilate anyone instantly. Therefore, there are moments between death and annihilation for God to swap bodies. The reason this is important is because the supposed atomic bomb problem is that there would be no time between my death from the bomb and my complete annihilation. But if it turns out that I die before I am annihilated, then God would have time to swap my body and preserve my identity.

Consider the findings from the report to prove this. For a nuclear weapon like an atomic bomb, there are several potential causes of death: blast and shock, thermal radiation, and nuclear radiation. It is only blast and shock that would have the ability to annihilate a person in the sort of way that would be a problem for van Inwagen. Thermal radiation and nuclear radiation do not annihilate bodies. Therefore, as long as blast and shock do not annihilate a person then there is time between death and disintegration, giving God time to take the body and preserve the identity of the person.

But blast and shock are the events that occur immediately—they are the incredible explosion at ground zero just before the giant mushroom cloud incinerates anything in its path. But, based on the scientific evidence, the blast and shock effects aren't the right type of effects that could simultaneously kill *and* annihilate someone. For example, the United States report describes the effects of a nuclear blast as follows:

²⁴⁴ Fakhri, "Physicalism, Bodily Resurrection, and the Constitution Account."

²⁴⁵ Fakhri, "Physicalism, Bodily Resurrection, and the Constitution Account," 107.

²⁴⁶ Samuel Glasstone and Philip J. Dolan, *The Effects of Nuclear Weapons* (United States Department of Defense and United States Department of Energy, 1977).

The sudden compression of the body and the inward motion of the thoracic and abdominal walls cause rapid pressure oscillations to occur in the air-containing organs. These effects, together with the transmission of the shock wave through the body, produce damage mainly at the junctions of tissues with air-containing organs and at areas between tissues of different density, such as where cartilage and bone join soft tissue. The chief consequences are hemorrhage and occasional rupture of abdominal and thoracic walls.²⁴⁷

The idea is that the blast and shock of the nuclear bomb do *not* annihilate people. Rather, they cause hemorrhage and occasional rupture of the body. Certainly, they cause death. But hemorrhage and rupture of bodies is not annihilation. Even if I lost a body part at my death, my personal identity would not be irreversibly severed on accounts of identity that require immanent causal connection. Therefore, God would not be at a loss for saving anyone in a nuclear bomb.

Further, the report details studies done on anthropomorphic dummies at ground zero of the explosion that would experience the same level of blast and shock as the bomb. These dummies, rather than being annihilated by the blast and shock, are catapulted incredibly fast across space *but* they are never annihilated. Specifically, they attain a maximum velocity of about 21 feet per second from the blast after being launched 9 feet from their original location within 0.5 seconds after the arrival of the blast wave.²⁴⁸ The reason these numbers are important is that the report admits that “the threshold value for skin lacerations is recorded as 50 feet per second and for serious wounds it is 100 feet per second.”²⁴⁹ Therefore, the force needed to even cause deep cuts in the skin or serious wounds is 3-5 times *more* than people experience in an atomic bomb blast. So, if I died from the blast and shock of an atomic bomb, the wounds I received would not be even half of what was necessary to cause deep cuts—cuts that would still be no problem for my personal identity as a human organism. Moreover, as the report later admits, “although there may be some hazard associated with the accelerative phase of body displacement by a blast wave, the deceleration, particularly if impact with a solid object is involved, is by far the more significant.”²⁵⁰ Therefore, it is quite clear that death in atomic bombs like those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki are *not* from instant annihilation. Death occurs before complete destruction (and complete destruction isn’t even possible from the force of such a bomb). Therefore, a nuclear bomb is an insufficient force for killing a person by annihilation. Whatever the cause of death is, it’s not from complete destruction. There remains time for God to “snatch” the body moments after death. So, even in atomic bombs, God has no problem saving our bodies for resurrection.

²⁴⁷ Glasstone and Dolan, *The Effects of Nuclear Weapons*, 12.26.

²⁴⁸ Glasstone and Dolan, *The Effects of Nuclear Weapons*, 12.44.

²⁴⁹ Glasstone and Dolan, *The Effects of Nuclear Weapons*, 12.47.

²⁵⁰ Glasstone and Dolan, *The Effects of Nuclear Weapons*, 12.49.

But are there any legitimate scenarios where someone can be simultaneously killed and destroyed? At least in the world of *Star Wars* this is possible. Here the Mandalorian has an Amban sniper rifle that disintegrates its targets on contact. The rifle shoots an energy ray that kills precisely by vaporizing the target. Death and destruction are simultaneous because it's the effect of disintegration that is the cause of death. If such a weapon could exist, it's possible that this scenario take place. Even if such a weapon never came into existence, it provides intuitive support for the possibility of events where death and destruction are simultaneous. But van Inwagen can always retort that these scenarios will never take place either because it's a mere possibility or because God will ensure they never happen. In order for the problem of death by instantaneous destruction to be a real worry it needs to be embarrassing for van Inwagen to hold it and it needs to be *real*.

3.3.2.3.6 A Final Potential Worry

While I have attempted to defend van Inwagen's model from a range of objections, I believe there may be one remaining objection that has not been sufficiently explored in the literature. If God were to snatch away our bodies to preserve for resurrection, what then are we to do with the cases of Jesus, Lazarus, and even the dead bodies rising from their graves in Matthew 27:51–54? If a van Inwagen inspired model is true, does God not have to return whatever he snatched away prior to *the* resurrection, then snatch again in the case of Lazarus, before returning it once more at the final resurrection? In the case of Jesus and Lazarus I do not think snatching is necessary since immanent causation can remain during their period between death and resurrection. The connection has not been wholly severed at that point. Further decay is required. But in the case of those that had died potentially decades or centuries prior, it does appear that God must preemptively return their essential body parts for them to be resurrected. But I see no serious problem with this if this is the mode of God's resurrection in general.

3.4 Other Potential Models and the Problem of Death

In my exploration into Baker and van Inwagen I have largely ignored other models of resurrecting the same body. I have largely been critical of substance dualism for lacking the resources to explain the purpose and necessity of the resurrection of the numerically identical body while also offering a materialist alternative that satisfies this desiderata. But there are several other models that may avail a substance dualist of greater resources, which I will briefly express below.

First, some deny that criteria exist for identity altogether.²⁵¹ There quite literally is no criteria for what preserves identity across time. Therefore, there is nothing we can say that the resurrection of the numerically same body is. Unfortunately, I, along with most, find this overly counter intuitive and relatively useless for holding to the theological motivations provided.²⁵² If there is another solution, it is preferable.

Second, Dean Zimmerman has his falling elevator hypothetical model that theorizes an extraordinary fission event at the instant before death. Your body fissions right before death and one is preserved for resurrection while the original body is the corpse.²⁵³ Other oddities aside (such as fission physics implying the new body being half the size, there is no overlap of new and old matter that is able to be assimilated between the old and new body, the problem of human organ transplants, the problem of temporary resurrection—i.e. what happens to Lazarus who dies, resurrects, and dies again?, closest continuer worries, etc.) this equivocates on the nature of death.²⁵⁴ If fission must occur before death (hence the “falling elevator” nickname—you escape death the second before the elevator crashes), no one truly “dies” in the normal sense of the term.²⁵⁵ Even Jesus wouldn’t have died. But such an unsavory implication (denying death) is too high a price to pay for any theory of resurrection and denies Scripture itself. For example, 1 Corinthians 15:22 claims that all die.²⁵⁶ Further, if death is avoided, resurrection must be completely redefined. As noted in the motivations, resurrection requires a *dead* body. On Zimmerman’s story, no one dies. More gravely still, Zimmerman must deny the possibility of Jesus’ corpse being gone in the “empty” tomb. If fission happens, not only is there no need for an empty tomb, it would be impossible given the fission event would leave the old body as a corpse in the tomb.²⁵⁷ So on Zimmerman’s account the dead body remains in the grave and the new body is only a causally connected duplicate.²⁵⁸

Another potential solution not expanded upon is that of Stephen T. Davis and Eric Yang. They propose that it is God’s will that is the difference maker in our composition. Formally their claim is this: “The xs compose some y at t if and only if (i) the xs exist at t, (ii) God wills that there be a fusion of the xs at t.” They argue that divine volitions are “a robust enough difference-maker between these two cases in the series.”²⁵⁹ So, the identical body is resurrected if a sufficient number of particles from the pre-mortem body are suitably

²⁵¹ Trenton Merricks, “There Are No Criteria of Identity Over Time,” *Nous* 32 (1998): 106–24; Simon Langford, “A Defence of Anti-Criterialism,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 47, no. 5 (2017): 613–30.

²⁵² Davis, “Physicalism and Resurrection,” 232–34.

²⁵³ Zimmerman, “The Compatibility of Materialism and Survival: The Falling Elevator Model,” 205–6.

²⁵⁴ Hershenov, “Van Inwagen, Zimmerman, and the Materialist Conception of Resurrection,” 452; Turner, *On the Resurrection of the Dead*, 89–97; Hasker, “Materialism and the Resurrection: Are the Prospects Improving?,” 103; Elliot Knuths, “A Problem for Christian Materialism,” *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 10, no. 3 (2018): 210; Jonathan J. Loose, “Materialism Most Miserable: The Prospects for Dualist and Physicalist Accounts of Resurrection,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, ed. Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J. L. Menuge, and J. P. Moreland (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2018), 476.

²⁵⁵ Johnston, *Surviving Death*, 100.

²⁵⁶ Fakhri, “Physicalism, Bodily Resurrection, and the Constitution Account,” 107.

²⁵⁷ Turner, *On the Resurrection of the Dead*, 96.

²⁵⁸ Turner, *On the Resurrection of the Dead*, 87.

²⁵⁹ Davis and Yang, “Composition and the Will of God,” 220.

arranged *and* God wills that these items compose the numerically identical pre-mortem body.²⁶⁰ But what is a sufficient number? And isn't God's will just hand waving by divine fiat? This seems like a trivial addition. Why need a "sufficient number" if God wills it? The move to a pure divine will seems to follow the logic of the anti-criterialist as well, which was rejected on grounds that it was both ad hoc and lacked any sort of explanatory power. I do not mean to indicate that Davis and Yang's theory is an anti-criterialist proposal—merely that their move naturally leads one toward such a view. But another problem could be spelled out as such: Even if God can will things to compose, it's not clear he has free reign on what sortals they fall under. Even God cannot decide my pencil is a cat. So even if God does compose atoms across time, aren't we faced with the substantially similar question of why the resulting object is a "body?" There are all these other bodies—spatiotemporally continuous etc.—belonging to other animals, but these new weird temporally scattered bodies seem very different. Are they, then, really bodies? Suffice to say, there proposal has its own oddities that may invite more metaphysical baggage than the alternative.

Finally, some wish to theorize an immediate resurrection by temporal parts. One temporal part remains in the grave while the other is immediately resurrected. But I think this largely has the same problems as van Inwagen but with even more skeptical metaphysical baggage. Hud Hudson summarizes quite well:

Despite all the wonderful advantages purchased by way of appeal to temporal parts, those advantages have to be purchased at the price of, well, a theory of temporal parts. And since that theory has been charged with incoherency, declared unmotivated, and criticized for the company it keeps (i.e., for its close association with counterpart theory), not everyone has been eager to purchase those advantages at this steep price.²⁶¹

Therefore, the options for a substance dualist—or for any other model—for a genuine Christian resurrection look rather dim. Maybe the intuitive oddness of van Inwagen's simulacrum aside, it may offer our greatest hope.

3.5 Conclusion

At the very least, the Christian doctrine of the resurrection as articulated in the ecumenical creeds and as expanded on and understood by various Christian thinkers throughout the tradition places substance dualism in an uneasy paradise. It does not have the resources to explain the resurrection—especially the resurrection of the numerically identical body—which I have argued is a necessary understanding of both Scripture and the Christian tradition. The body that dies is the very same body that rises, which requires some level of

²⁶⁰ Davis and Yang, "Composition and the Will of God," 223.

²⁶¹ Hudson, "The Resurrection and Hypertime," 266–67.

mereological continuity—however small—since without it, the body will be numerically distinct. Even if you accept or reject immanent causal connection as necessary you still need mereological continuity. You need *some* of the same stuff. But even if the numerically identical body is not required, having a philosophical story for how it *could* happen is useful philosophy.

While resurrection by simulacrum has received numerous criticisms, I suggest that it is a live and salutary option for the metaphysics of Christian resurrection and should be taken seriously. The charges leveled against it, whether it be insufficiently motivated as a theory, it implicates God in mass deception, it is less than satisfying like thinking dinosaur bones are only 6,000 years old, or is impossible due to annihilation, are not sufficiently justified. And even if one finds another model of resurrection preferable, it should not be rejected as impossible. At the very least van Inwagen's thesis should provide support for the coherence of the resurrection of the self-same body, which is all he was initially after to begin with.

4 - EMBODIMENT, HUMANNESS, AND

CONCILIAR CHRISTOLOGY: MERRICKS'S

SOULLESS SAVIOR REVISITED

4.1 Introduction

The Chalcedonian Definition states that the Son of God is one person in two natures “without confusion, change, division, or separation.”²⁶² The Son’s human nature is said to have both a rational soul and body. Many have taken this to mean that materialism about human persons is incompatible with Christian orthodoxy because it rejects an immaterial substantial soul. Chalcedon says there is a soul and materialists say there isn’t. Case closed. Thus, the Christian tradition stands as an insurmountable obstacle for materialism.²⁶³ While materialism may be short of formal heresy, it supposedly deviates from this crucial aspect of the creeds.²⁶⁴

However, others have suggested that there are greater costs associated with alternative views such as substance dualism.²⁶⁵ For example, Trenton Merricks claims that substance dualists cannot account for the embodiment or humanness of Christ, which would require a denial of Christian orthodoxy for *substance dualists*.²⁶⁶ But several substance dualists have provided lengthy rebuttals to Merricks, contending that his arguments fail.²⁶⁷ Despite the many critiques of Merricks, I argue that the problems Merricks initially posed for substance dualism have not been fully examined and in one case not avoided. Insufficient attention has been paid to the overall classical theological grammar that is used as a defeater in these debates. Therefore, my goal in what follows is to show that substance dualism remains in a quandary for affirming Conciliar Christology—particularly the Chalcedonian Definition. In fact, if substance dualism is unable to provide replies to Merricks, then it will require potentially radical revisions of Conciliar Christology. And if this is the

²⁶² Price and Gaddis, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 1:68.

²⁶³ See Crisp, *God Incarnate*, 140–42; Plantinga, “Materialism and Christian Belief,” 99; Loftin and Farris, “Christian Physicalism? An Introduction.”

²⁶⁴ Loftin and Farris, “Christian Physicalism? An Introduction,” xx.

²⁶⁵ Merricks, “Dualism, Physicalism, and the Incarnation”; Crisp, *God Incarnate*, 152.

²⁶⁶ I am taking the liberty to describe what Merricks calls “dualism” as “substance dualism” given the nature of my preferred ontological taxonomy.

²⁶⁷ Kevin W. Wong, “Pairing Problems: Causal and Christological,” *Perichoresis* 19, no. 2 (June 1, 2021): 99–118, <https://doi.org/10.2478/perc-2021-0013>; Luke Van Horn, “Merricks’s Soulless Savior,” *Faith and Philosophy* 27, no. 3 (2010): 330–41, <https://doi.org/10.5840/faithphil201027333>; Luke Van Horn, “Dualism Offers the Best Account of the Incarnation,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, ed. Jonathan J. Loose, J. L. Menuge, and J. P. Moreland (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2018); Kevin W. Wong, “The Union of Divinity and Humanity: Defending Dualism Through Christology” (PhD Dissertation, Wheaton College, 2020).

case, then it is not a greater worry that materialism may deny the Chalcedonian Definition since substance dualism would do so as well. Of course, this may be a happy conclusion for Neo-Aristotelian dualists!

I prove this by summarizing Merricks and the replies to his arguments while offering strengthened versions of the problems that undercut the substance dualist replies. It is important to re-examine some of the older debates related to this quandary as it can shed much light on some of the important ways classical theology can shape philosophical reflection on human persons. And given the nature of the argument I make, I assume that Conciliar Christology is true and thus a desideratum for any true theological or philosophical account. Therefore, alternative Christological theories such as Kenoticism do not play a role in the following argument. While they may solve some of the problems for either substance dualism or materialism they are not an option for the person committed to the veracity of Conciliar Christology.

4.2 The Embodiment Problem

Trenton Merricks has argued that substance dualism cannot account for the incarnation because of its account of embodiment. According to Merricks, for substance dualism, there is no account of embodiment whereby *all* three persons of the Trinity don't end up being embodied in *every* single body that ever has existed. If all persons of the Trinity are embodied in the same way, the incarnation cannot be a unique event of the Son alone, which is *contra* Conciliar Christology. Therefore, the incarnation of the Son alone is impossible. Instead of the Son alone being hypostatically united with a human nature, all three persons of the Trinity are. But according to the theology of Chalcedon, it is *the Son* that was incarnate for us and our salvation and *not* the Father or Spirit. If this is true, it seems substance dualism should be rejected if one desires to maintain an orthodox view of the incarnation.

4.2.1 Swinburne's Account of Embodiment

Merricks begins by assuming that since the incarnate Son is human, he is human like the rest of us. And since humans (at least in this life) *have* a human body, then the Son has a human body in the same way we do.²⁶⁸ If you do not have a body (at least in this life), you are not human (at least in this life). This doesn't require a substance dualist to think that part of what it means to *be* human (e.g., to be a member of the natural kind human) is to essentially have a body just as the fact that all humans are born on Earth doesn't mean what it is to be human has anything to do with the location of our birth (future humans born in space are still humans). The point is rather modest that part of being human is having a body in some relevant sense since none that we know of has ever lacked a body. The "having" relation here will be explained further in due course. For now, take it to be an elastic term that means whatever substance dualism might take to be the embodiment relation (e.g., the soul "possesses," "owns," or "controls" a body). While a substance dualist might want to

²⁶⁸ Merricks, "Dualism, Physicalism, and the Incarnation," 281.

say embodiment is only an accidental feature for humans, we are all embodied (at least in this life). So, the basic thinking so far goes like this:

14. If x is human, then x has a body (i.e., you are *embodied*)
15. Christ is (became) human
16. Therefore, Christ has a body

So far so good. But the “having” a body relation needs specificity, precisely what it means for Christ to “have” a body. Given materialism, it’s easy to see what it is to have a body. To have a body is to be identical to, or constituted by, that body. On substance dualism this is slightly more complicated.

Merricks attempts to provide what he considers the “most natural” version of embodiment for substance dualism. He offers Richard Swinburne’s account as representative, who says, “A person has a body if there is a chunk of matter through which he makes a difference to the material world, and through which he acquires true beliefs about that world.”²⁶⁹ This can be cashed out in terms of causal control and direct epistemic access:

Substance Dualist Embodiment =_{def} Subject S is embodied in chunk of matter x iff (1) S has direct causal control over x and (2) S has direct epistemic access to x

So, for this account of substance dualism, “having” a body (e.g., being embodied) means someone (let’s say, a soul) having direct causal control of *and* direct epistemic access to a particular body.²⁷⁰ Our bodies then are the “vehicle” for our operation and knowledge.²⁷¹ Such an account is not obscure among dualists. For example, J. P. Moreland and Scott Rae similarly define the embodiment relation by direct immediate conscious awareness throughout the body and the direct and immediate ability to will the body to act.²⁷² But each of these conditions require further elucidation.

Direct causal control has at least two key factors for Swinburne. First, *causal* control means that my soul can *cause* my body to act in various ways. For example, I do not have control over the United States President’s body. I cannot directly cause it to look into the sky, walk into a sandwich shop, or admire a beautiful tree. However, I do have the ability to cause my own body to move, breathe, and see. Of course, maybe I could persuade the President to enter a sandwich shop through various means. This is where the direct aspect is important. *Direct* causal control means that my soul can bring about a state of affairs without the need of some other state of affairs.²⁷³ In other words, I can *directly* cause my arm to raise without needing to actualize some other state of affairs to cause my arm to raise. There is no intermediary that I need to cause these things. I don’t need to run

²⁶⁹ Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, Rev. ed (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 146.

²⁷⁰ Merricks, “Dualism, Physicalism, and the Incarnation,” 282–83.

²⁷¹ Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, 146.

²⁷² Moreland and Rae, *Body & Soul*, 202.

²⁷³ Edward R. Wierenga, *The Nature of God: An Inquiry into Divine Attributes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 21.

a computer program or flip a switch. It is an immediate control over my own body that actualizes the state of affairs. Moreover, my soul can cause *this* body to raise its arm or to move its leg directly but cannot directly cause another body to do such a thing. I may walk over to the person sitting beside me and raise their arm with my own body, but this isn't a direct casual action.

Direct epistemic access for Swinburne is about how a particular body provides beliefs about the world to the person/soul. Stimuli that land on a person's eyes, ears, mouth, etc. give beliefs about the world directly.²⁷⁴ There is no external intermediary that provides such epistemic content. Such a claim is not about epistemic certainty. It is about the epistemic mechanism for acquiring beliefs. It is the first-person perspective from which we introspect and experience deep subjectivity and qualitative feel.²⁷⁵ For example, *my* body gives access to knowledge of what an iced vanilla latte tastes like because my tongue is able to taste it whereas another body drinking a black coffee wouldn't give me direct access to such a belief. I might know theoretically about what such coffee tastes like, with hints of chocolate or berries, but I wouldn't have the direct experience of knowledge that my body brings. In other words, there is no need for an intermediary to deliver such knowledge when my body experiences it firsthand.

Given Swinburne's account of embodiment, a substance dualist account of embodiment joined up with the incarnation would look like this:

17. If x is human, then x has a body
18. Christ is (became) human
19. Therefore, Christ has a body
20. If x has a body, then x has direct causal control *and* direct epistemic access to that body
21. Therefore, Christ has direct causal control and direct epistemic access to his body (17,18)

Notice the additional claim related to direct causal control and direct epistemic access. This is the key addition that needs to be examined. And again, thus far, the thinking appears somewhat innocuous for substance dualism. It is not until the next step that possible problems become apparent.

4.2.2 The Problem of Direct Epistemic Access and Divine Omniscience

Given such an account of embodiment Merricks argues that two problems ensue for substance dualism—one for direct causal control and one for direct epistemic access. Merricks argues that if embodiment is at least partly based on direct epistemic access, then each person of the Trinity “has” every body that ever was since God is omniscient. The idea goes roughly like this: since God is omniscient, he has epistemic access to

²⁷⁴ Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, 146.

²⁷⁵ Joshua R. Farris, *The Creation of Self: A Case for the Soul* (Washington D. C.: John Hunt Publishing, 2023), 24.

everything in and around every body.²⁷⁶ Therefore, all three persons of the Trinity are embodied in every body and the Son cannot have the body of Jesus *in particular*. So, the argument is something like this:

22. If x has direct causal control and direct epistemic access to a body, then x has that body
23. If each divine person is omniscient, then each divine person has direct epistemic access to every body
24. Each divine person is omniscient
25. Therefore, all three persons of the Trinity are embodied in every body

The implication is supposed to be that all three persons of the Trinity cannot be embodied, or incarnated, in every single body that has ever existed. Therefore, something must be wrong with the argument since the conclusion cannot follow. Conciliar Christology demands that only the Son is embodied by becoming incarnate. Therefore, one committed to orthodox Christian doctrine ought to reject substance dualism. But there are several challenges to this argument.

First, as Luke Van Horn has suggested, Merricks is assuming a radical form of open theism to sustain his argument. To see why this is the case, we need to be more specific about omniscience and “direct epistemic access.” Omniscience is generally taken to mean that God infallibly knows all that can be known.²⁷⁷ Richard Swinburne has glossed this as a strong account wherein God as omniscient “knows of any proposition that is true, that it is true.”²⁷⁸ But this is really a garden variety of omniscience in the Christian tradition. Most traditional theistic accounts also ascribe exhaustive definite foreknowledge to God—he knows all future contingents absolutely.²⁷⁹ Such knowledge isn’t discursive or successive since on most traditional accounts God knows all things through his own essence and is timeless.²⁸⁰ There is no need for God to recall facts. He knows them all immediately. Those like Swinburne find such exhaustive knowledge incompatible with free will and thus revise omniscience to exclude knowledge of future contingents that aren’t necessary or logically entailed by prior events.²⁸¹

Now, the real reason Merricks is assuming open theism is because he understands direct epistemic access to be more than about knowing all true propositions (as most accounts of omniscience ascribe to God) but about being *caused* to know things (which most accounts of omniscience do *not* ascribe to God—those like Swinburne being excluded). There are stimuli that *cause* me to have a belief B that I wouldn’t have otherwise. This demands an open theist account of divine knowledge since on traditional accounts God’s knowledge is

²⁷⁶ Merricks, “Dualism, Physicalism, and the Incarnation,” 285.

²⁷⁷ John C. Peckham, *Divine Attributes: Knowing the Covenantal God of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 111.

²⁷⁸ Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, Second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 177.

²⁷⁹ Peckham, *Divine Attributes*, 114.

²⁸⁰ Johann Gerhard, *On the Nature of God and on the Most Holy Mystery of the Trinity*, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, trans. Richard J. Dinda (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), 224–25.

²⁸¹ Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 196.

exhaustive and definite. It is not discursive or successive in any sense. But the bodily criterion used by Merricks (and by extension Swinburne) assumes a direct epistemic access that includes discursive and successive knowledge—things that God cannot have on pain of incoherence with the divine nature.

So, with these accounts of omniscience in mind, Van Horn naturally rebuts that a theological determinist (or anyone with a strong account of omniscience that entails God knows all future contingents) could easily avoid Merricks's argument because God's omniscience does *not* cause him to know things by the happenings in the world. God quite simply *doesn't* have direct epistemic access to everything. Rather, God himself providentially *causes* and creates every happening and knows them through knowing his own essence.²⁸² This account of omniscience is the traditional view among most Reformed and Thomistic thinkers, so this is certainly not an *ad hoc* move. For example, Herman Bavinck (1854–1921) forcefully argues that God's "knowledge is not a posteriori, obtained by observation, but a priori, present from eternity." Any conception that allowed something for God to not know is "absurd."²⁸³ Stephen Charnock (1628–1680) is similar, stating that "God knows all other things, whether they be possible, past, present, or future"²⁸⁴ Finally, Francis Turretin too ascribes exhaustive knowledge to God, saying he knows "all things extrinsic to him whether possible or future."²⁸⁵ Moreover, it is nearly universal among classical theists to think that the Son's human nature doesn't affect or cause his divine nature in any sense. The Son remains impassible as divine. Therefore, there is no reason to think God is embodied in every body if this is true of God's knowledge because God doesn't have this sort of direct epistemic access of *anything*, much less every body.

Fine and good. Case closed. Or is it? Merricks in fact notes this sort of possible objection to his embodiment argument. He calls it a "Platonic" claim about God, which according to Merricks is the claim that God is self-sufficient and unchanging. While Merricks mentions these attributes, based on his further explanation of what he means, I take it that he *isn't* interested primarily in self-sufficiency *or* immutability but the doctrine of impassibility which claims that God cannot be externally *caused* to feel or know anything. All of God's knowledge is from the knowledge of his own essence and not from his creation. Given impassibility and traditional accounts of omniscience as described above, God's knowledge doesn't require causation from bodies or persons or anything outside of himself. Therefore, he isn't embodied in every body by way of direct epistemic access because he doesn't have direct epistemic access of every body as omniscience does not maintain this.

But Merricks rejects this rebuttal because it would apparently entail that God the Son is not influenced by his body which he finds to be inconsistent with the incarnation.²⁸⁶ What else are we supposed to make from the

²⁸² Van Horn, "Merricks's Soulless Savior," 332.

²⁸³ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 2:192.

²⁸⁴ Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*, ed. Mark Jones (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 627.

²⁸⁵ Turretin, *IET*, III.12.3.

²⁸⁶ Merricks, "Dualism, Physicalism, and the Incarnation," 286.

fact that Christ experiences hunger and the like? But if we assume a classical version of Christology instead (ignoring other alternatives like Kenotic models since we are assuming that Conciliar Christology is a desideratum worth maintaining), Merricks's worry is simply out of step with the classical view. It is precisely the classical view that the Son is not influenced by his body. For example, Cyril of Alexandria's *Second Letter to Nestorius* received synodal approval at both the Council of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451) and is considered a "*de facto* definition of the faith."²⁸⁷ Within this letter, Cyril flatly states that God is impassible because he is incorporeal.²⁸⁸ He repeats this sentiment throughout his works: the Word is impassible.²⁸⁹ For example, in the *Unity of Christ*, he says, "in his own nature he certainly suffers nothing, for as God he is bodiless and lies entirely outside suffering."²⁹⁰ In his *Third Letter to Nestorius*, which received synodal affirmation at the second Council of Constantinople (553), Cyril argues that "the one who abides eternally, according to the scriptures, is entirely unchanging and immutable."²⁹¹ Likewise, Chalcedon affirmed Pope Leo's (400–461) *Tome* as orthodox as read against the backdrop of Cyril.²⁹² Leo later provided a more mature reflection, his *Second Tome*, in which he asserts that the divine essence is immutable, impassible, and timeless.²⁹³ Therefore, on standard accounts of divine omniscience, like those assumed in Conciliar Christology, no person of the Trinity has direct epistemic access to everything, much less every body. God's knowledge is not one of first-person perspective of everyone because he is immutable and impassible. And so, God doesn't know what it feels like for Joe to be Joe or for Mary to be Mary, but this doesn't jeopardize omniscience since that is not what the traditional doctrine requires. So, the worry of direct epistemic access does not entail all three persons of the Trinity as embodied in every body since God does not have such direct epistemic access of everyone given divine impassibility. His epistemic "access" is not receptive but creative. He knows things in virtue of his own essence. Now, in the case of the incarnation, the divine Son *does* have direct epistemic access since he is not two persons. There is a single person and just as Mary is the Mother of God according to his humanity, Jesus knows what the sea of Galilee feels like and looks like on a calm afternoon according to his humanity. In sum, God knows in a mode analogous to propositional knowledge all the facts about what it's like to see the color blue, experience pain, be human (or a bat), etc. But he lacks "knowledge" by acquaintance of such things in the sense that he doesn't know experientially the feeling of pain, etc. However,

²⁸⁷ Price and Gaddis, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 1:24.

²⁸⁸ Cyril of Alexandria, "Second Letter to Nestorius," in *The Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings*, ed. Mark DelCogliano, trans. Matthew R. Crawford, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 568, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781107449640.041>.

²⁸⁹ Cyril of Alexandria, "Second Letter to Succensus," in *The Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings*, ed. Mark DelCogliano, trans. Matthew R. Crawford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 743, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781107449640.053>.

²⁹⁰ Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, trans. John Anthony McGuckin (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), 121.

²⁹¹ Cyril of Alexandria, "Third Letter to Nestorius," in *The Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings*, ed. Mark DelCogliano, trans. Matthew R. Crawford, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 628, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781107449640.046>.

²⁹² Donald Fairbairn, "Interpreting Conciliar Christology: An Overview in the Service of Analytic Theology," *Journal of Analytic Theology* 10 (November 15, 2022): 376–77, <https://doi.org/10.12978/jat.2022-10.050013031403>; Price and Gaddis, *The Council of Chalcedon*, 1:67.

²⁹³ Leo of Rome, "The Second Tome (Letter to Emperor Leo)," in *The Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings*, ed. and trans. Mark DelCogliano (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 120–21, <https://doi.org/10.1017/97811009057103.005>.

the person of the Son has experiential, “what it’s like” knowledge of pain with respect to his human nature, and insofar as the Son is God, we can truly say that God has such knowledge.

Yet, this sort of rebuttal to Merricks actually leads to a second and more interesting problem. Merricks appears to treat each condition separately as if embodiment according to Swinburne *weren’t* a conjunctively necessary and sufficient claim. However, direct causal control and direct epistemic access *are* conjunctively necessary and sufficient conditions for embodiment for Swinburne and many, if not most, substance dualists. So, even if Merricks’s argument were to be successful on this point, it does not automatically follow that a substance dualist has any worries. For example, as long as God the Father and God the Spirit don’t *also* have direct causal control of the chunk of matter that is Jesus’ body then all three persons are not embodied. Embodiment requires more than mere direct epistemic access. Yet, the rebuttal from Van Horn severs the conjunctive nature of epistemic access and causal control by arguing that God does *not* have direct epistemic access of anything besides his own essence. Therefore, while it may be a jointly necessary and sufficient claim for *humans* to have direct causal control and direct epistemic access it is not one for the divine. Therefore, direct causal control would be the only condition for divine embodiment. If this is true, then the divine cannot become embodied in the same way that a human person does, which is bad news for the substance dualist. But if one were to scrap the conjunctively necessary and sufficient claim, one still needs only prove that God has direct causal control over everything to show that the incarnation occurs in every single body. To this condition we now turn.

4.2.3 The Problem of Direct Causal Control and Divine Omnipotence

Merricks also argues that if embodiment is at least partially based on direct causal control, then all three persons of the Trinity end up being embodied since God is omnipotent.²⁹⁴ The basic idea is this: since God can directly causally control everything, if direct causal control is a necessary and sufficient condition for embodiment, then all three persons of the Trinity are *embodied* in every body that exists. To understand the logic here it is important to sketch a general view of omnipotence first.

A standard account of omnipotence claims that God can strongly actualize *any* state of affairs.²⁹⁵ By “strongly actualize” it is meant that God can *directly cause* them.²⁹⁶ Of course, this would be limited by certain factors such as logical impossibilities, willing evil, and depending on the definition, human free will.²⁹⁷ So, God can strongly actualize any logically *possible* state of affairs, with perhaps a class of exceptions.²⁹⁸ It is relevant to

²⁹⁴ Merricks, “Dualism, Physicalism, and the Incarnation,” 284.

²⁹⁵ Wierenga, *The Nature of God*, 25.

²⁹⁶ Wierenga, *The Nature of God*, 20–21.

²⁹⁷ Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*, 907.

²⁹⁸ Katherin A. Rogers, “An Anselmian Approach to Divine Omnipotence,” in *T&T Clark Handbook of Analytic Theology*, ed. James Arcadi and James T. Turner (New York: T&T Clark, 2021), 101; Katherin A. Rogers, *Perfect Being Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 97; Anthony Kenny, *The God of the Philosophers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 98.

note that such definitions of omnipotence do not entail God *doing* every action but the ability to bring the state of affairs about. Omnipotence is not primarily about the act of God but the ability to bring a thing into existence.²⁹⁹

Take the Father for example. Since the Father is omnipotent, he has direct causal control over everything, including every human body. He can cause my eye to twitch and my arm to itch. And he can do this for every body that exists. So, if he has direct causal control over every human body, then he is embodied in every human and non-human body on the assumption that direct causal control is sufficient for embodiment. And if a being couldn't directly cause me to do something, then there would be something he couldn't do that he should be able to do given standard accounts of divine omnipotence and, thus, that being wouldn't be omnipotent. Bracket out the typical limitations such as sin, logical inconsistencies, free-will, and the like. If God couldn't directly cause me to wake up in the middle of the night, he wouldn't be omnipotent. Since Christianity generally affirms a strong account God's omnipotence that would allow for such divine causal activity, this means the Trinity is embodied in everyone—leading to some version of pantheism or panentheism and destroying the uniqueness of the incarnation. So, the argument from direct casual control against dualism runs like this:

- 26. If God is omnipotent, then he has direct causal control of everything (and hence, every body)
- 27. God is omnipotent
- 28. Therefore, God has direct causal control of every body (24, 25)
- 29. If x has direct causal control of a body y , then x is embodied in y
- 30. Therefore, God is embodied in every body. (26, 27)

As Merricks has shown, at least one influential account of dualist embodiment will accept that having a body is about having direct causal control and direct epistemic access. If we presuppose the necessity of classical Christological doctrine and reject the conjunctively necessary condition of embodiment, then only direct control is necessary and sufficient for embodiment in the divine since direct epistemic access is impossible given divine impassibility. Therefore, since on standard accounts of omnipotence, it is widely affirmed that God has direct causal control of every body, then the implication is that all three persons of the Trinity are embodied since for every property God has, each person of the Trinity has it (except their personal property, e.g., their relation of origin). If the incarnation is about God the Son's becoming *human* (e.g., having a *particular* body) and not God the Trinity becoming human, substance dualism cannot affirm the incarnation. Moreover, it would seem to imply that God the Son has incarnated in *my* body!

²⁹⁹ Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*, 909.

The most natural initial reply to this problem is that the Father and Spirit don't actively *exercise* such control whereas the Son *does exercise* it in relation to one specific "chunk of matter." So, there is a distinction between *having* and *exercising* control (e.g., having the ability and actually doing it), and, therefore all three persons of the Godhead are *not* embodied in every single body. Only the Son is embodied in such a way since he *exercises* that direct causal control while the Father and Spirit do not. On this distinction, the two ways to be embodied could be defined as follows:

Model A: Soul x is embodied in body y *iff* x **can** exercise direct control over y

Model B: Soul x is embodied in body y *iff* x **is** exercising direct control over y

However, making embodiment dependent on *exercising* control (model B) to solve the Trinitarian worries has serious consequences. For example, on model B, if the soul ever doesn't intend bodily actions, it wouldn't be embodied, which seems a counterintuitive result.³⁰⁰ It would be rather odd to suggest that I can become disembodied if my soul, for any split second, does not exercise control over some aspect of my body. If there is ever a moment, whether in sleep, rest, or mental relaxation, that my soul does not exercise *direct* control, it is disembodied (at least in a partial sense). Also, it seems odd that model B is phrased as a present participle. For example, it's not as if I am constantly exercising direct control to raise my hand. Therefore, appealing to this distinction does not quickly resolve the worry for substance dualism.

Again, Luke Van Horn has offered a way to undermine Merricks's embodiment problem by providing a revised account of embodiment. Van Horn adjusts Swinburne's account of embodiment by adding the notion of *disposition*. So, what makes this my body and not another is that my soul is casually *disposed* to have direct causal control over it and not another. Here is how Van Horn defines it:

S is embodied in x *iff* S is causally disposed to have direct causal power over x and x is causally disposed to cause effects in S .³⁰¹

On this account, S is only embodied in a particular body if they are casually *disposed* to have direct control and epistemic access to that particular body. This additional criterion is critical for the success of the substance dualist rebuttal. Given this additional claim it is supposed to mean that you can have direct causal control of everything and yet not be embodied in everything—only the body that you are *disposed* to have causal control over is the one you are embodied in. Therefore, the Triune God can be omnipotent, having direct control over everything, and yet not be embodied because embodiment is about a *causal disposition* which only the Son has over his particular body.

³⁰⁰ Merricks, "Dualism, Physicalism, and the Incarnation," 285.

³⁰¹ Van Horn, "Dualism Offers the Best Account of the Incarnation," 447.

While this rebuttal appears persuasive, there are two problems with it so far as I can tell. First, Van Horn's solution doesn't seem to work given the standard understanding of a disposition. Van Horn's closest thing to a definition of disposition is when he contrasts a causal disposition with "actually causing" things.³⁰² So it appears that a disposition is some sort of latent potency on his account. While he doesn't spell out his account, he references accounts by Peter Unger and John Foster. Unger speaks of "individualistically-directed propensities" or individualistic powers. As an example, a person's digestive power is a physically derivative *propensity* of the biological human person.³⁰³ Each of my electrons (or basic properties, whatever they are) has a propensity to promote (when configured appropriately) certain experiences.³⁰⁴ So, how is it that an immaterial non-spatial soul is connected to a body? Unger's answer is *propensity*, which I take Van Horn to generally map onto his account of dispositions.³⁰⁵ Your body has the *propensity* (or disposition) with respect to only this soul or mind.³⁰⁶ In a different manner, Foster speaks of particular *laws*. There are restricted laws for each particular person wherein brains and minds are linked. There is a correlation between the two which grounds the connection between soul and body.³⁰⁷ Given his reliance on these accounts, I take it that Van Horn's account would likely follow the Simple Conditional Analysis of dispositions:

Simple Conditional Analysis (SCA): An object is disposed to action x in circumstance c *iff* it would x if it were the case that c .³⁰⁸

So, for example, wires are disposed to conduct electricity when they are touched by a conductor if and only if they would conduct electricity if it were the case that they were touched by a conductor. Likewise, if glass is disposed to breaking when it is struck by a baseball if and only if it would break if it were the case that it was struck by a baseball. SCA as defined here assumes an account of conditional necessity wherein dispositions manifest when in the appropriate circumstances *necessarily*.³⁰⁹

With this sort of definition in hand, embodiment being a matter of causal disposition, as Van Horn suggests, would mean that the relevant action (direct causal control in this case) would be completed if it were the case that the person was embodied in a particular body (the circumstance). So, if SCA is true, it seems Van Horn's definition is circular. S is embodied if S is causally disposed to have direct causal control over a particular chunk of matter, yet S is causally disposed to have direct causal control over a particular chunk of matter if it

³⁰² Van Horn, "Merricks's Soulless Savior," 334.

³⁰³ Peter K. Unger, *All the Power in the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 378.

³⁰⁴ Unger, *All the Power in the World*, 385.

³⁰⁵ In personal correspondence with Van Horn he indicated that his reference to Unger and Foster were for the purpose of providing two options and that he did not intend to endorse either of their accounts.

³⁰⁶ Unger, *All the Power in the World*, 247.

³⁰⁷ John Foster, *The Immaterial Self: A Defence of the Cartesian Dualist Conception of the Mind* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 167–68.

³⁰⁸ Sungho Choi and Michael Fara, "Dispositions," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2021, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/dispositions/>>.

³⁰⁹ Anna Marmodoro, "Dispositional Modality Vis-à-Vis Conditional Necessity," *Philosophical Investigations* 39, no. 3 (July 2016): 205, <https://doi.org/10.1111/phin.12125>.

were the case that *S* was embodied. In other words, it's not clear what is grounding what if embodiment is a matter of causal disposition alone. Of course, Van Horn could simply retort "this is a deflationary model and I am a realist about these things." Fair enough!

A second worry for Van Horn is that it remains unclear why the Father and Spirit aren't *disposed* to have direct causal control over my body, even though that's one of their abilities, and yet the Son *is*. There is nothing on Van Horn's account that would limit the Father and Spirit from being disposed in the same way that the Son is. Maybe it is possible to say that a disposition is something endowed by God, and it must be specifically endowed for each object and these dispositions can be specific (a disposition to cause effects in a specific soul, for example).³¹⁰ While this move appears to work, it also appears to be entirely ad hoc and something we would wish to avoid if possible.

I suggest that Classical Trinitarian theology can shed some light on this quandary. Within its vast sum of doctrines is the dogmatic rule of *inseparable operations* which is the claim that every act token of any Trinitarian person is *also* an act token of the other Trinitarian persons.³¹¹ So, for every divine act, whether ascribed to the Father, Son, or Spirit, the act is one of all three persons. This includes even the act of the incarnation itself. As Richard Cross has noted, there is medieval consensus that "for the Son to become incarnate does not require his exercising any causal power other than that exercised by all three divine persons."³¹² For example, John Duns Scotus (1265/66–1308) argues that the property in virtue of which a divine person can have a human nature can't be the divine essence lest all three persons are incarnate.³¹³ If this is true, it seems that Van Horn has no way to avoid the problem of divine omnipotence from Merricks since all three persons of the Trinity act inseparably. One must also wonder why the Father and Spirit are not causally disposed to have direct causal power over Christ's body, given their omnipotence.

However, a question does arise at this point against Merricks and inseparable operations. If these two accounts are simultaneously true, why think Merricks's account can avoid the *same* implication that all three persons of the Trinity are embodied? If inseparable operations is true, it seems there is a more fundamental incarnational dilemma than merely about direct causal control. The assumption of the human nature would then belong to the *whole* Trinity. However, Adonis Vidu has argued that this conclusion fails to take account of a proper ontology of action. Vidu explains that the assumption of a human nature in the incarnation is not exhaustively categorized as an action. He believes this because his account of action has two necessary conditions. An action must:

³¹⁰ Van Horn suggested this potential option to me via email.

³¹¹ Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things*, xv.

³¹² Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, 153.

³¹³ Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, 157–70.

- A. Include a change that takes place in the world (e.g., there is an *event* where there is a change from one state to another)
- B. Have responsibility for the change be ascribable to an intentional agent.³¹⁴

Given these two conditions, for every action there is both activity and passivity. There is an active agent that brings about an event but there are also passive recipients of the event.

Consider Vidu's example of a butler dressing a lord. The event of lord John being dressed by butler Xavier is one that includes dual agency but only one personal actor. The butler is ascribed the action of dressing while the lord is ascribed the state of being dressed. So, even though lord John certainly has some action involved (he breathes, he moves, he assists with the dressing by moving his legs in a certain way), he is not the agent of the action in the event. In a similar way, the incarnation has traditionally been understood to be an *event* that includes both active and passive agents of an action. The originating action is caused inseparably by the Trinity but the passive patient—the one in which the action terminates—is the Son alone. The hypostatic union of the Son, is therefore, not properly an action but a relation of dependence. His human nature *depends* on the Son for existence. Therefore, the inseparable unified action results in a state that characterizes the Son alone.³¹⁵ And the reason the Son alone is the terminating source is not because of divine omnipotence or anything else in the divine nature but because of the personal property of the Son.³¹⁶

So, it seems, there must be an alternative account of embodiment that does not rest even on direct causal control. If this is true, both of Merricks's challenges to substance dualism will ultimately fall flat for the one committed to Conciliar Christological claims. Alternative accounts of embodiment need not fully detain us here. Whether one opts for a different metaphysical "link" like those of Scotist tendencies that posit an explanatory entity (e.g., a unifying relation) that connect the divine person of the Son alone with the human nature or for a natural sort of connection like those of Thomist sympathies, it appears there are solutions on offer that avoid both of Merricks's problems.³¹⁷ What is important to note is that refining the conception of embodiment based on traditional philosophy of mind conceptions without recourse to Christological reflection is detrimental to the project of understanding the metaphysics of the incarnation. One cannot simply assume the truth of any model of the human person, whether substance dualism or materialism, without recourse to Christological dogma. Therefore, while my overarching thesis is a criticism of substance dualism in particular, part of the nature of my thesis is also the claim that Christology is a refiner of our understanding of human nature. We must not construct any theory in a way that is in conflict with it. And in the case of embodiment, many have not sufficiently worked out their ideas or theories in light of Christology.

³¹⁴ Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things*, 160.

³¹⁵ Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things*, 160–62.

³¹⁶ Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, 171.

³¹⁷ Richard Cross, *Christology and Metaphysics in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

4.3 The Humanness Problem

Merricks's second key problem with substance dualism is that it makes God the Son's becoming human *different* from his becoming embodied since humans do not *always* need bodies to be humans. Therefore, Merricks suggests that versions of Apollinarianism and Monophysitism result from substance dualism because Christ's becoming human (i.e., the incarnation) is a distinct act from his becoming embodied. And since Apollinarianism and Monophysitism have been deemed as heresies by the church (and certainly not part of Conciliar Christology), it is a good reason to abandon substance dualism. Before examining the logic of this argument it is helpful to briefly define both Apollinarianism and Monophysitism.

Apollinarianism claims that Christ did not have a human rational soul *since* he already had a rational soul as a divine person (e.g., the divine *Logos*). His divine rational soul (the *Logos*) "substituted" for the human soul that is typical of human persons. And the *Logos* "indwelt and energized" the human body.³¹⁸ Therefore, Christ is lacking one aspect of the human nature as confessed in Chalcedon.³¹⁹ Hence, it runs afoul of Conciliar Christology, because Christ is not *fully* human if he lacks one essential component part (the human rational soul).

Monophysitism is distinct from Apollinarianism and is primarily identified with Eutyches of Constantinople (c. 380–c. 456). For Monophysitism, instead of the divine *Logos replacing* the human soul and generating a new nature, the divine *Logos is merged* with a human body and soul composite to generate a new single nature. Later Monophysites typically insist this nature was a "*tertium quid*" or third distinct thing that is neither human nor divine.³²⁰ Therefore, Monophysitism rejects the Chalcedonian claim that Christ has *two* natures (without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation).³²¹

The reason that substance dualism apparently leads to these heresies is that on at least some models of substance dualism (e.g., Swinburne), having a body is neither necessary nor sufficient for being human. The reasoning, according to Merricks, for this conclusion is that if I can die and still be human, then my body isn't necessary or sufficient for me being human. Therefore, the Son's becoming human isn't a matter of having a human body (despite being assumed as necessary in the above arguments). If true, substance dualism means that the Son's becoming incarnate as a human is one thing while becoming embodied is something else.³²² This is problematic for those that affirm Conciliar Christology since Christ is said to become incarnate by taking on soul *and* body and not merely a soul (hence, premise 32 below is seen as a necessary element of

³¹⁸ Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, 50.

³¹⁹ Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 298.

³²⁰ Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 303.

³²¹ Merricks, "Dualism, Physicalism, and the Incarnation," 292.

³²² Merricks, "Dualism, Physicalism, and the Incarnation," 293.

Conciliar Christology and one that cannot simply be removed on other ontological grounds). For expediency I am ignoring the soul here and focusing on the body. So, the argument seems to go like this:

31. The thing in virtue of which a human is a human cannot vary from human to human
32. If x is human, then x is human in virtue of (at least partially) x having a human body
33. God the Son became human (e.g., the incarnation)
34. Therefore, God the Son became human in virtue of (at least partially) becoming embodied in a human body
35. If substance dualism is true, then it's possible that a human exists and has no body
36. If x is a human and does not need a body, then x is human not in virtue of (at least partially) having a human body
37. Therefore, substance dualism is false

The basic idea is that since substance dualism doesn't require humans to have bodies then the incarnate Son needn't have one. Therefore, the fact that he *does* have one (*and* the fact that the church has confessed that he *needs* a body to be human—e.g., we should assume the truth of 32 on theological grounds, whether this is necessarily true metaphysically or not) conflicts with substance dualism's understanding of humanness. There is a contradiction between the claim of 31 and the claim of 33. For example, as the Chalcedonian definition explains, Christ assumes a rational soul *and* body. Without the body, Christ would not assume a full human nature. Since the body is an essential part of human nature, premises 31 and 32 are required which entails the contradiction from substance dualism.

Maybe one questions whether 32 is true. Maybe the Son took on a human body and soul but he didn't *need* to do so *in order to be human*. But the claims of those within Conciliar Christology understand the body as a necessary element of the incarnation precisely because the body is necessary to the natural kind human. For example, John of Damascus says that the Son assumed “what is representative of the human substance” which is a body “ensouled with a rational and intelligent soul.”³²³ Similarly, Cyril states that “he himself became flesh, that is became man.”³²⁴ His sentence structure here restates his first point which shows that part of taking a human nature is having a body. Elsewhere he explains that the Son “necessarily” is “born of the flesh, taking all that is ours into himself so that all that is born of the flesh, that is us corruptible and perishing beings, might rest in him.”³²⁵ Cyril similarly offers other arguments for the necessity of the incarnation including the body (and soul). Many of these are soteriological in nature. For example, he says “if the Word has not become flesh then neither has the dominion of death been overthrown, and in no way has

³²³ John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*, 46.

³²⁴ Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, 63.

³²⁵ Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, 59.

sin been abolished.”³²⁶ The point here is that redemption requires the incarnation of the Son with a body and soul and not with simply a soul. He can only restore what is broken by taking and redeeming the broken elements themselves.³²⁷ Along these lines he also suggests that the weaknesses we experience in the body require a body: “How could he who has all power ever have been tired, or how could one ever say that he who is the good and life of all beings was ever hungry, if he had not appropriated to himself a body which by its very nature was subject to hunger and tiredness?”³²⁸ Maybe someone would object to the reasoning here and argue that the body is not necessary. But if they do so, they are arguing against the rationale of Conciliar Christology which I’ve sought to assume as true for the sake of argument herein.

But Luke Van Horn thinks there is nothing in substance dualism that requires it be possible to be human without being embodied (hence, he denies 35).³²⁹ To prove this Van Horn argues that there is no reason to assume human persons are *essentially* human. So, yes, human persons can be disembodied, but persons cease to be *human* when disembodied.³³⁰ Van Horn argues that it is the “natural thing” to think that persons are rational souls that are capable of being embodied in all sorts of bodies, whether crocodile bodies, Kryptonian bodies, Hobbit bodies, or otherwise.³³¹ If a soul was embodied in a Hobbit body it would be a Hobbit. If it were embodied in a crocodile body, it would be a crocodile. “Kind essentialism” that would require persons to be their *kind* essentially, is simply false. So, for the Son to become incarnate as a human—even on substance dualism—he *must* have a human body. Without a human body he isn’t human. Nor is he Hobbit or anything else. It is in acquiring a body of a certain type that he *becomes* human.³³²

I take it that Van Horn’s rebuttal is good so far as it goes, though it comes at the price of rejecting kind essentialism, which is something many would prefer to keep. But whether one has strong intuitive preferences for kind essentialism or not, I think Van Horn has made a serious misstep. In suggesting that the “kind” human is dependent on the right sort of body he has inadvertently maintained an Apollinarian or Monophysite view of Christ as Merricks had originally claimed. Here’s why: If it is the *body alone* that makes me human (or makes me a Hobbit or Crocodile or whatever else)—this mirrors the reasoning behind Apollinarianism. Remember, Apollinarianism claims that Christ did not have a human rational soul since he already had a rational soul as a divine person (e.g., the divine *Logos*). And it became a target for Conciliar Christology because Christ is not *fully* human if he lacks one essential component part (the human rational soul). And we need a *fully* human Christ given the claims of Conciliar Christology (which are grounded in their own theological rationale, but I am assuming for the sake of argument). The reason Van Horn appears

³²⁶ Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, 60.

³²⁷ Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, 55.

³²⁸ Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, 56.

³²⁹ Van Horn, “Merricks’s Soulless Savior,” 336.

³³⁰ Van Horn, “Merricks’s Soulless Savior,” 336.

³³¹ Van Horn, “Merricks’s Soulless Savior,” 336.

³³² Van Horn, “Merricks’s Soulless Savior,” 337.

to be violating this same principle is because he argues that it is the *body* that constitutes human nature alone despite persons being partially (or wholly) constituted by *souls*. Souls are not human. It's a category error to think they are. Only souls embodied in human bodies are human. It is the type of body that determines what *kind* of thing it is. If my soul were embodied in a wizard's body, I would be a wizard. My soul could be identical to the one I have now with no ontological change. The body contains all of the ontological makeup that accounts for whether I am one kind of thing or another.

Therefore, while Christ would be fully human in virtue of having a human body he wouldn't assume a full human nature according to Chalcedon (since this requires a *human* soul and a *human* body). While Van Horn could avoid Monophysitism by rejecting a *tertium quid* nature, his account separates the human body and soul. He makes humanness dependent on the material make up of a chunk of matter and removes the rational soul from it. While embodiment is a necessary condition of being human our souls are capable of being embodied in any number of bodies (Hobbit, Vulcan, etc.) and so the divine Son does not have a human soul, for that would entail two persons.³³³ Therefore, the rational soul is neither human nor Hobbit nor Vulcan. It is something indeterminate. The fundamental reason Conciliar Christology rejected Apollinarianism is because it meant Christ was not fully human—he needed more than just a human body. So, while Van Horn does include a soul, he removes its humanity from it. While Van Horn may claim that this is just how all humans are structured, it seems to make the moves in the Conciliar creeds to protect themselves from Apollinarianism superfluous.

But couldn't Van Horn say that to be human is to have 1) a rational soul and 2) a human body? If so, the Son having a rational soul and taking on a human body is just as human as I am. So in a sense, he's human just like me. But this conflicts with Conciliar Christology and its requirement that the Son have a distinct human soul that is not simply what existed prior as the Logos himself. Further, as the sixth ecumenical council elucidates, the Son must have a human soul that is distinct from the divine for the purpose of having a human principle of operation. Scott Williams has described the logic within this council at length in a recent essay of his. In a relevant section he explains:

The “canonical logic,” which is endorsed by Constantinople III, is that the number of wills, powers, and operations correspond to the number of essences or natures, and not to the number of hypostases. Put otherwise, the number of wills, powers, and operation depends on the number of natures.³³⁴

³³³ Van Horn, “Merricks’s Soulless Savior,” 335–36.

³³⁴ Scott M. Williams, “Discovery of the Sixth Ecumenical Council’s Trinitarian Theology: Historical, Ecclesial, and Theological Implications,” *Journal of Analytic Theology* 10 (October 21, 2022): 341, <https://doi.org/10.12978/jat.2022-10.180219220818>.

The point here is that the rational soul of the human nature *cannot* function duplicatively and do “double” work. The divine cannot simply substitute for the human soul lest Apollinarianism be had.

4.4 Conclusion

Given the logic of the conciliar creeds, especially as they relate to Chalcedon and the nature of the incarnation, I have argued that Trenton Merricks’s original arguments against substance dualism remain persuasive and that his humanness argument has yet to be truly defeated. While I suggest that his argument against substance dualism from the incarnation and embodiment fails because the problems of direct epistemic access and direct causal control do not arise for the thinker already committed to the doctrines of Conciliar Christology, I’ve argued that examining them has elucidated the fact that insufficient attention has been paid to dogmatic theological reflection. It is this very attention to dogmatic reflection as embodied in the Conciliar Christological tradition that I am assuming throughout this thesis for the sake of further elucidating human nature. This is why I have suggested that substance dualism has even further problems for affirming various dogmatic doctrines that form the grammar of the conciliar tradition. While I have not proven in this instance that the materialism of Merricks can escape the claws of Conciliar Christology, it seems clear that substance dualism is no obviously safe haven. Therefore, my argument in this chapter has been more negative in scope, showing the insufficiency of substance dualism instead of providing alternative models.

5 - DESCENDING TO THE DEAD: ON A LITERAL DESCENT IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

The Apostles' and Athanasian Creed both confess that Christ "descended to the dead." This is part of Conciliar Christology. Historically this is typically understood to mean that Jesus literally descended to the underworld *between* his death and resurrection (e.g., on Holy Saturday).³³⁵ Given this, the descent has attracted its fair share of triumphalism from substance dualists since if materialism were true then Jesus' body would need to descend, but it remained in the grave between his death and resurrection since there is nothing that could descend to the underworld during this time where he was a lifeless corpse. Thus, materialism is false and substance dualism is true.³³⁶

On account of this some have argued that virtually all Christian traditions, whether Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, or Reformed, require a complete denial of materialism of any sort.³³⁷ But despite this apparent consensus I argue that it is wrong to assume that substance dualism is a superior alternative to materialism for the descent. In fact, I argue that the opposite is the case. If one wants to affirm a literal descent, a version of materialism is needed to do the job otherwise a metaphorical descent is the only possibility. I prove this with two arguments. First, if substance dualism is to affirm the traditional understanding of the descent it must reject Cartesian substance dualism in favor of the less popular position that souls are spatially located. Second, substance dualism in general—Cartesian or non-Cartesian—cannot affirm a crucial aspect of Jesus' triumphal action in the descent since souls cannot causally act without bodies. Therefore, I conclude that if one is to affirm a literal descent, it is less metaphysically costly to affirm a version of materialism. Now, this conclusion is not intended to be robust enough to remove the possibility of souls—it is more modest. It intends to suggest that souls do not serve a useful role in the descent. One may still affirm the existence of a soul, but the soul will not serve the descent in any positive way.³³⁸

³³⁵ Justin Bass, *Battle for the Keys: Revelation 1:18 and Christ's Descent into the Underworld*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 2; Hilarion Alfeyev, *Christ the Conqueror of Hell: The Descent into Hades from an Orthodox Perspective* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009), 9.

³³⁶ For example, see Matthew Y. Emerson, "Mapping Anthropological Metaphysics with a Descensus Key: How Christ's Descent to the Dead Informs the Body-Mind Conversation," in *The Christian Doctrine of Humanity: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders (Los Angeles Theology Conference, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018).

³³⁷ Emerson, "Mapping Anthropological Metaphysics with a Descensus Key: How Christ's Descent to the Dead Informs the Body-Mind Conversation," 206.

³³⁸ *Contra* Matthew Y. Emerson, *He Descended to the Dead: An Evangelical Theology of Holy Saturday* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 72.

5.1 Two Arguments Against a Substance Dualist Descent

While many have assumed that substance dualism is the only way to affirm the descent, I argue against this. In fact, I think substance dualism has two fatal problems when it comes to the descent as traditionally understood. When I speak of substance dualism here, I am especially interested in the most traditional form that claims that I am identical to my soul. As a soul I am strictly immaterial and thus my soul is not extended, spatially located, made of stuff, or dependent on the world.³³⁹ The immaterial and material realms are ontologically separate (though time is an exception).³⁴⁰ Due to this, it is essential for souls to be nonspatial.³⁴¹ This view is most often called Cartesian substance dualism and so at least in this chapter I will use the terminology of Cartesian to highlight the nonspatial nature of the soul.

5.1.1 The Descensus Location Problem

With this in view, the first problem is this: Cartesian substance dualism (which I take to be the most popular variety of contemporary substance dualism) claims that the soul is not located but the descent requires a change in location. Therefore, Cartesian substance dualism cannot affirm the descent. I would put this formally as follows:

- 38. If x descends to the underworld, then x changes location
- 39. If y is not located, then y cannot change location
- 40. Cartesian substance dualist souls are not located
- 41. Therefore, a Cartesian substance dualist soul cannot descend to the underworld

But maybe 38 and 39 are not quite right. Maybe action is sufficient for location, meaning the soul is “located” at any region at which it can act and thus can “change” location. There is no need for it to have actual spatial properties. It has spatial properties in virtue of its relation to something else. Therefore, if Jesus acts in the underworld he is located there. To best determine the viability of this solution I need to define two ways of understanding location. Regardless of whether substantivalism or relationalism is true about space, objects can be understood to be located at a place in either a *fundamental* or *derivative* sense. They can be defined formally as follows:

³³⁹ Zimmerman, “Three Introductory Questions,” 24; Plantinga, “Materialism and Christian Belief,” 121; Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro, *A Brief History of the Soul*, Brief Histories of Philosophy (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 70–71; John Foster, “A Brief Defense of the Cartesian View,” in *Soul, Body, and Survival: Essays on the Metaphysics of Human Persons*, ed. Kevin Corcoran (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 16.

³⁴⁰ Foster, *The Immaterial Self*, 8–9.

³⁴¹ Jaegwon Kim, “Lonely Souls: Causality and Substance Dualism,” in *Soul, Body, and Survival: Essays on the Metaphysics of Human Persons*, ed. Kevin Corcoran (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 40.

Fundamental Location: x is located at p fundamentally $\equiv_{df}$ x is located at p in its own right, i.e., not in virtue of standing in relation(s), $r(s)$, to some distinct y that is located at p in its own right.

Derivative Location: x is located at p derivatively $\equiv_{df}$ x is located at p in virtue of standing in some relation(s), $r(s)$, to some distinct entity, y , where y is located at p fundamentally.³⁴²

So, for a soul to be fundamentally located somewhere, it must be located there in its “own right.” Fundamental location, then, requires fundamental spatial properties. But Cartesian substance dualism denies the soul has these types of properties. It is not fundamentally located anywhere. Therefore, it must be derivatively located. It is derivatively located in virtue of its relation to corporeal action. But the problem is that there needs to be a distinct entity that can bear the causal relation that allows the soul to have a derivative location. The soul’s causal powers are only operative through the body which does not descend. Since the corpse remains dead in the grave and there is no other relation that could locate the soul during this time in the underworld, the soul cannot even descend derivatively since the body is the only spatial relation available. If the literal descent to the underworld is true, the only possible form of location is fundamental location since bodies remain in the grave. And if souls aren’t spatially located (or are derivatively located with a body) Jesus cannot descend *anywhere*. If souls are nowhere and nowhen it is flatly impossible to literally descend.³⁴³ Therefore, if true, the only theories that bear out the descent are non-Cartesian models of dualism (which are most often Neo-Aristotelian) and materialism.

5.1.2 The Descensus Action Problem

But there is a more general problem for substance dualism—Cartesian or not. If the descent requires casual action in the underworld and the soul is all that descends then substance dualism is impossible for the descent since the body is required for casual action (at least the sorts of causal action we assume are necessary in addition to mental things, such as speaking and moving), as noted above. And the Bible requires Christ to perform actions in the underworld. For example, texts like Luke 16 and 1 Peter 3:18–22 indicate that Christ “proclaims” to the spirits in prison. Proclamation requires functioning postmortem capacities to communicate. While there is contentious debate surrounding what Jesus accomplishes during his descent everyone agrees he does something. Whether he simply proclaims victory or if he leads a host of captives free, he must act. It is not merely a shadowy sedentary existence. Therefore, Jesus must have the requisite metaphysical structure to act in the underworld. The argument formally, then, is as follows:

³⁴² Inman, “Omnipresence and the Location of the Immaterial,” 169.

³⁴³ Contemporary defenders of the descent like Matthew Emerson have not recognized this problem and thus he posits Cartesian souls that lack all literal spatial properties, most notably spatial extension, without any reflection on the potential costs like I outline here.

42. If Jesus descends to the underworld, then Jesus performs casual actions in the underworld
43. If Jesus performs causal actions, then Jesus has a body
44. If substance dualism is true, then there are no bodies in the underworld
45. Therefore, if Jesus descends, then substance dualism is false

But what if I receive a numerically distinct body during my time in the descent allowing for spatial location and casual powers in the underworld despite my “old body” being in the grave? I suggest this remains problematic since gaining a new body seems to run against something implied in the claim that Jesus’ body must remain in the grave for the descent to be appropriately understood. If Jesus is given a numerically distinct underworld body, then it is not clear in what sense he remains dead between his death and resurrection. In other words, if he is given a new body, no longer causally controlling his old one, then he doesn’t remain biologically dead. It turns out that he is alive and well in the underworld. But maybe the new body is relevantly dissimilar to normal bodies, lacking any biological indicators that our bodies have—it might *look* like ours, but not (internally/biologically) be anything like ours. Therefore, he isn’t really “alive” in a biological sense that would make us think his resurrection *actually* occurred prior to the third day (which is when Conciliar Christology would tell us he resurrected). But I find it hard to understand what it would mean for it to be a *body* if it had no biology whatsoever. Bodies just are biological organisms on *any* model of the human person, save idealism.

Therefore, if the literal descent is a requirement for Conciliar Christology substance dualism must be false. The only theories able to affirm a literal descent at this point would be materialism, idealism, or a form of Neo-Aristotelianism. To defend these arguments, I will do two things. First, I will explain the rationale for why one would think Conciliar Christology would require the descent as literal rather than metaphorical. Through this I will determine whether a change in location and causal action are required for a literal descent. Second, I will explore which metaphysical theories can meet such a version of the descent. I will argue in fuller detail why substance dualism cannot and why materialism can.

Before continuing on, I should note a further potential problem for substance dualism. While a substance dualist can say that Jesus “dies” since his body is biologically dead and his dead body remains in the grave for three days, if bodies are only “mine” so long as I am casually connected to them (taking the “having” relation between a soul and a body to be sufficiently explained by direct causal control), this would imply that at death my body is no longer mine but is an unrelated heap of matter arranged corpse wise since the causal connection is severed. This would be problematic, at least for Conciliar Christology, since the descent anticipates that Jesus’ body remains in the grave. If Jesus no longer has causal control over his body besides previous causal control, then it is no longer relevantly “his.” Granted, I take it that many would be content with a corpse being counted as “mine” if previous causal control existed and no interim causal control from

someone else had yet taken place. So long as the corpse remains unenlivened by anything else it can remain “his.” And this *is* the case for Jesus.

5.2 The Metaphysics of the Descent

The Apostles’ and Athanasian Creed both confess that Christ “descended to the dead.” Thus, Conciliar Christology is committed to the descent of Christ. But there are two overarching ways to interpret this—metaphorically or literally. Taken metaphorically the descent refers not to literally *going* to the underworld but to another event such as Christ’s earthly incarnation, his burial, the torment on the cross, or otherwise.³⁴⁴ For example, John Calvin (1509–1564) takes the descent to refer to Jesus’ spiritual torment on the cross in his soul.³⁴⁵ Caspar Olevianus (1536–1587), the co-author of the Heidelberg Catechism, similarly takes it to refer to the anguish on the cross *and* humiliation in the grave.³⁴⁶ These interpretations are *wholly and solely* metaphorical. Jesus never descends to a literal region and never literally acts in the underworld. On this understanding the descent is akin to the saying “I went to hell and back.” When someone utters this, he doesn’t mean he *literally* went to a place that is hell and then returned. He intends to convey that what he experienced was awful. While these metaphorical interpretations have gained acceptance since the Reformation, I do not treat them as possibilities for the purposes of this chapter since if they are true then the metaphysical constraints of the descent do not impinge on any metaphysical theory. In other words, if the descent is metaphorical then any model of the human person can meet its dogmatic demands. But if the descent is literal, I argue there are serious problems for substance dualism—this despite some substance dualists arguing based on a literal descent that their view is correct. My goal, then, is to understand what metaphysical possibilities are available for the one committed to a literal descent.

The descent taken literally means that Jesus descended to the underworld between his death and resurrection. He *went* to the location where the righteous and unrighteous are located after death.³⁴⁷ As the creedal clause reads, Christ descended *to* the underworld. The preposition indicates that he went *somewhere* rather than *nowhere*. He was located on earth and then was located in the underworld before returning to the earth. Therefore, Jesus literally descended to the place of the dead which means he changed location.

5.2.1 Motivating a Literal Descent

While I take the literal descent for granted in this chapter, there are reasons to believe a literal interpretation is true. First, many argue that the myriad of metaphorical interpretations hardly represent the idea of descent

³⁴⁴ Bavinck, *RD*, 3:415; Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 533–36.

³⁴⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 2.16.10.

³⁴⁶ Caspar Olevianus, *An Exposition of the Apostles’ Creed*, trans. Lyle D. Bierma, *Classic Reformed Theology*, v. 2 (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009), 89–90.

³⁴⁷ Emerson, *He Descended to the Dead*, 30.

that is stated in the creedal formulas. “He descended to the dead” isn’t fairly explained by experiencing anguish on the cross or by recounting his entire incarnation because it connotes an actual going somewhere. Moreover, the Apostles’ creed confesses literal event after literal event. To relativize the descent clause to a metaphorical meaning is to go against the ethos of the creed. As Wayne Grudem notes, interpreting it metaphorically is “an inaccurate attempt to salve some theologically acceptable sense out of the words.”³⁴⁸ Now, this doesn’t mean he descended to *hell*, the place of eternal torment. Unfortunately, the terminology is often lost in translation. The biblical witness offers various words whereas our English only has one—hell. There is the Hebrew *sheol* and the Greek *hades*, which refer to the place where all the dead dwell, i.e. the underworld. But there is also the Greek word *ghenna* which is the closest referent to the English hell since it is the place judgment of the unrighteous.³⁴⁹ When the descent is proclaimed, it is understood that he descended to the underworld and not to the place of torment.

A second reason to take the descent as literal is that historical consensus supports it. From Irenaeus to the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) there is a common consensus that Jesus literally descended.³⁵⁰ Not until Martin Bucer (1491–1551) does anyone suggest a metaphorical descent. While there were widely varying beliefs as to *what* Christ accomplished during his descent there was universal consent *that* he descended to the underworld.³⁵¹ Herman Witsius (1636–1708) calls the literal understanding of the creed the “native, proper, and literal sense of the expression.”³⁵² In 1533 Martin Luther (1483–1546) was even willing to confess that Christ descended “in the whole person God and man, with body and soul, undivided.”³⁵³ Luther’s view is admittedly an oddity, claiming that the very body of Jesus leaves the tomb and descends as well, but it is quite literal nonetheless! Therefore, if one is to reject a literal descent he must be willing to reject at least fifteen hundred years of church history. That’s why many have claimed that affirming the literal spatial descent is a theological “safeguard of catholicity.”³⁵⁴ I take this as a *prima facie* substantive reason to start with the possibility of affirming a literal descent.

A third reason to take the descent as literal is theological. The most natural understanding of the biblical “descent” texts is literal.³⁵⁵ For example, Ephesians 4:9 locates the underworld somewhere in the “lower

³⁴⁸ Wayne Grudem, “He Did Not Descend Into Hell: A Plea for Following Scripture Instead of the Apostles’ Creed,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34, no. 1 (March 1991): 106.

³⁴⁹ Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 398–401; Emerson, *He Descended to the Dead*, 30; Alfeyev, *Christ the Conqueror of Hell*, 11.

³⁵⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.27.2.

³⁵¹ Bass, *Battle for the Keys*, 2; Michael F. Bird, *What Christians Ought to Believe: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine through the Apostles’ Creed* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 147; Donald Fairbairn and Ryan M. Reeves, *The Story of Creeds and Confessions: Tracing the Development of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 120.

³⁵² Herman Witsius, *Sacred Dissertations: On the Apostles’ Creed*, trans. Donald Fraser (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), 2:143.

³⁵³ “Eine Predigt über den zweiten Artikel des christlichen Glaubens von Jesu Christi”, St. L. X, 1088–1139.

³⁵⁴ Jeffery L. Hamm, “Descendit: Delete or Declare? A Defense Against the Neo-Deletionists,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 78 (2016): 115.

³⁵⁵ Bird, *What Christians Ought to Believe*, 145.

regions”, claiming, “In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?” So, it is natural to assume the underworld is literally spatially located, though likely far from our purview, and that Jesus actually *went* there.³⁵⁶ Elsewhere in 1 Peter 3:18–22 the descent is a literal *going* somewhere.³⁵⁷ Peter comments, “being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison...” This comment is bookended by confessing a literal death and a literal resurrection, which would make it rather odd for them to sandwich a metaphorical descent. The theological language that Jesus rose “from the dead” is also foundational. This may appear innocuous at first, but most take this phrase to be an explicit reference to the descent because “the dead” or (νεκρός) is always plural, meaning it should be translated “realm of the dead” or underworld and not just a rising from the literal grave.³⁵⁸

More broadly, Patrick Schreiner has explained how the “kingdom of heaven” phrase in Matthew (the antonym of the underworld) is a real locative realm which would intuitively lead us to think that Jesus must literally descend to the underworld if it is a literal place. Why would the kingdom of heaven be literal for the ascension but the underworld be metaphorical for the descent? That would be an odd pairing. Schreiner argues that the prepositions connected to the kingdom of heaven in Matthew naturally denote location, the verbs denote a spatial concept (e.g. motion verbs), the similes and images reveal a spatial argument, the antonym of kingdom (underworld) indicates a space, and the language of kingdom of heaven implies spatial understanding.³⁵⁹ Based upon this Matthean survey, Schreiner concludes that the phrase kingdom of heaven “logically necessitates a spatial territory.”³⁶⁰ Jonathan Pennington even suggests that denying a spatial sense to the kingdom of heaven would require a wholesale revision of the meaning of heaven in Matthew.³⁶¹ Therefore, there is good reason to think that the gospel of Matthew presents a literal understanding of heaven and the underworld, which would lead us to assume *prima facie* a literal descent.

Similarly, consider 1 Samuel 28 and the story of Saul, Samuel, and the medium at Endor. The medium in the story tells Saul that she sees Samuel “coming up out of the earth” (28:13) with the appearance of “an old man...wrapped in a robe” (28:14) and the dead Samuel asks Saul “why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?” (28:15). These statements assume a literal existence somewhere which would mean Jesus would need to go somewhere to descend as the creed says. Now, it might be that the writer of 1 Samuel thought there was a literal underworld and so the narrative implies that. But does that mean that the contemporary believer

³⁵⁶ Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 73; See also Jacobs, “Are Created Spirits Composed of Matter and Form? A Defense of Pneumatic Hylomorphism,” 95. He says: “The very concept of the intermediate state entails that the disembodied soul retains location and situation.”

³⁵⁷ David P. Scaer, “He Did Descend to Hell: In Defense of the Apostles’ Creed,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35, no. 1 (March 1992): 95.

³⁵⁸ Bass, *Battle for the Keys*, 29; Emerson, *He Descended to the Dead*, 58.

³⁵⁹ Patrick Schreiner, *The Body of Jesus: A Spatial Analysis of the Kingdom in Matthew* (London: T&T Clark, 2018), 28–35.

³⁶⁰ Schreiner, *The Body of Jesus*, 36.

³⁶¹ Jonathan T. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 297.

should also accept it? There's a deep question about the character, extent, and nature of revelation here. For instance, it's typical to say that contemporary believers shouldn't be committed to the cosmology of the biblical writers (e.g., there is no reason to assume the sun moves around the earth, etc.) but why doesn't that extend to this material? This is an important criticism and one worthy of extended elaboration. Unfortunately, due to the focus of this thesis, a full-scale defense is impossible to provide. Therefore, if the reader finds the implication from 1 Samuel less than convincing for this reason, they are free to discard it without eliminating the entire argument. This is but one reason to motivate a literal descent.

Theologically speaking, the doctrine of the ascension requires a spatially located heavenly realm. If Jesus is embodied after his resurrection as the gospel witnesses claim, when he ascends to heaven, he ascends embodied which would require heaven to be a location that can contain a physical body. Even if one could avoid this by characterizing Jesus' resurrected body as uniquely spiritual and non-spatial there are two Old Testament stories that appear to require the conclusion that heaven is an extended spatial location. Genesis 5:24 says that "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him" and 2 Kings 2:11 tells of the story where "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." Both stories believe that natural physical bodies leave the confines of earth and enter heaven—which would need to be spatially located for such a feat to occur. Therefore, the natural implication (or at least *prima facie* belief) is to think the underworld is similarly spatially located.

A final reason to affirm a literal descent is that unless given alternative evidence, we should assume a literal interpretation. The Catholic Encyclopedia argues this way by saying that "no cogent reason has been advanced for accepting a metaphorical interpretation in preference to the most natural meaning of the words of Scripture. Hence theologians generally accept the opinion that hell is really within the earth."³⁶² Therefore the Catholic Encyclopedia suggests that we should tend towards a literal interpretation unless we have good reason not to and it claims that this is the case for the descent—there is no good reason to assume it is metaphorical. Moreover, taking it as metaphorical would generate myriads of theological problems. A non-located underworld would require us to take all the normal theological language about the underworld as anti-realist. Hud Hudson presses this point well, saying, "the presupposition of location can be found everywhere—from speculative angelology and demonology to both Old and New Testaments, to the creeds, to the pulpit, to conversations at the dinner table."³⁶³ Therefore, I take it that there are good reasons to affirm that the underworld is spatially located and the descent literally means that Christ went there. But to be clear, a literal understanding of the descent does *not* require the underworld to be in the earth—it only requires it to be spatially located.

³⁶² Joseph Hontheim, "Hell," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910).

³⁶³ Hud Hudson, *The Metaphysics of Hyperspace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 187.

5.2.2 Defeaters to a Literal Descent

Before moving on, I must address three primary defeaters to a literal descent. First, many find a literal region of space that is the underworld to elicit embarrassing problems like “where is it?” and “why can’t we travel there and find all the dead people roaming around?” For example, J. T. Turner says: “Given that we know that Paradise isn’t a physical location in the ‘current’ cosmos (we can’t, for example, hop in a spaceship and travel to it), it would have to be, on this view, an immaterial non-physical spatially extended location in the cosmos.”³⁶⁴ Similarly Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928–2014) has asserted that “neither heaven nor hell can be fitted into the time and place co-ordinates of the world of the modern experience of nature.”³⁶⁵ But no one has proven that it isn’t a physical location in the current cosmos. Nor has anyone proven that we can’t travel there. Maybe it is in a location that is beyond our capacities or safeguarded by God. No one has yet found the original Eden from Genesis, but this is no reason to automatically discard it as a literal region of space. No one has found Amelia Earhart and the denizens of lost items in the Bermuda Triangle. Equally, there is no reason it couldn’t be a region not within our universe but nevertheless spatial, either disconnected or (à la Hudson) connected to our universe in a way that we can’t interact with or appreciate. Therefore, given the evidence in favor of a literal descent to a literal underworld in spacetime, I find this defeater to be less than convincing.

Second, many have traditionally taken the underworld to be in the center of the Earth. But if it’s in the earth’s core, we’ve been there (not literally as a person but through tools with cameras and such) and found nothing, right? While this is a common intuition and we do have good enough evidence to know what the Earth’s core is made of thanks to seismology, we haven’t ever come close to physically making our way there. The deepest hole we’ve ever created on the surface is the Kola Superdeep Borehole in Russia which took 20 years to dig and it only goes down a pitiful 12.3 km. For context, the central point of the Earth is over 6,000km down, and the outermost part of the core is nearly 3,000 km below our feet.³⁶⁶ But even if this is true, there is a further worry—if the underworld is literally under my feet in the center of the earth, how would that many bodies fit there (not to commit ourselves to that being the location, of course)? Well, a little mathematical research should resolve this worry. The average cubic size of a human body occupies 1.76 feet of volume. The size of the Earth’s core is almost 25 trillion cubic feet. Given this, there is room for over 14 trillion human bodies. According to the Population Reference Bureau, over the last 50,000 years, more than 108 billion people have lived.³⁶⁷ That is less than 1% of the cubic volume of the center of the earth, needing to be

³⁶⁴ James T. Turner, “On Two Reasons Christian Theologians Should Reject The Intermediate State,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 11, no. 1–2 (2017): 137, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15697312-01101023>.

³⁶⁵ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *The Apostles’ Creed in the Light of Today’s Questions* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 91–92.

³⁶⁶ Chris Baraniuk, “How We Know What Lies at Earth’s Core,” August 13, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20150814-what-is-at-the-centre-of-earth>.

³⁶⁷ Carl Haub and Toshiko Kaneda, “How Many People Have Ever Lived on Earth?,” January 23, 2020, <https://www.prb.org/howmanypeoplehaveeverlivedonearth/>.

multiplied 131 times over before space becomes a worry. Assuming these bodies will be moving around and not packed like sardines still doesn't extend the worry given the vast space still available. But whatever one makes of this, there is no reason one must be committed to the location of the underworld being in the Earth—it could be located anywhere.

Finally, the law of entropy has proven to hold for every region of the cosmos. This is potentially problematic for a literal descent because it would entail that heaven too would trend toward heat death. Heaven is supposed to be a paradisiacal state where the law of entropy couldn't possibly hold. And on a literal descent, the underworld includes heaven (the righteous part of the underworld) where God's unmediated existence exerts its influence and wherein sin cannot exist.³⁶⁸ Therefore, the underworld (because of heaven) cannot exist in a universe where the law of entropy is true since this would contaminate heaven by sin and death which cannot dwell with God. However, according to Ephesians, the "heavenly realm" where God's presence is unmediated (Eph 1:3, 1:20) is also the same location where the spiritual forces of evil dwell (Eph 6:12). This seems to suggest the law of entropy could be true even in "heaven." Moreover, certainly the angels of Isaiah 6 that cry "Holy, Holy, Holy" regarding God are located in "heaven" and yet they traverse between locations implying that heaven must be located lest the absurd conclusion be that angels can shift from being non-located creatures to located creatures. If one remains unconvinced, a plausible alternative is to locate the underworld in hyperspace.³⁶⁹ Some even suggest that separate spacetimes are not only logically possible but preferable. Therefore, I take it that a literal descent is both coherent and preferable.

5.2.3 On the Inadequacy of a Partially Literal Descent

But some may object to such a literal understanding of the descent and claim that a literal descent can be partly literal and partly metaphorical. This interpretation would view the change of location as metaphorical rather than a literal spatial movement. This would mean that Jesus does "descend" but he doesn't *go* to a literal physical place. It isn't metaphorical in the same way that "I went to hell and back" is metaphorical but it is still deflationary since he doesn't actually go anywhere. Matt Emerson is an example of a partially metaphorical interpretation as he suggests:

While the Bible and Christian tradition use spatial references to refer to the fate of the dead (i.e. of souls separated from their bodies by death), we do not mean by using them that there is an accessible location beyond the sea or under the earth where the dead dwell. These are figurative, but nevertheless communicate truths about reality.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁸ James T. Turner, Jr., "Purgatory Puzzles: Moral Perfection and the Parousia," *Journal of Analytic Theology* 5, no. 1 (June 14, 2017): 197, <https://doi.org/10.12978/jat.v5i1.149>.

³⁶⁹ Hudson, *The Metaphysics of Hyperspace*, 184–88.

³⁷⁰ Emerson, *He Descended to the Dead*, 35 fn41.

He goes on to say that “what Scripture describes with locative and spatial terms is a spiritual reality, not mappable on geographic or cosmographic terms.”³⁷¹ He says that by using “metaphorical” he means to affirm a flexible cosmology that is “not necessarily indicative of a literalistic meaning.” He claims spatial language is being used for “nonspatial realities.”³⁷² Finally, he argues that since the underworld is a location where angels and demons reside and angels are creatures with a spiritual nature that normally exist in “non-extended ways”, this implies that the underworlds cosmology is a *non-physical, spiritual, and invisible* realm which he then calls spatially metaphorical.³⁷³ Therefore, Emerson claims that Christ descends in a “spatially metaphorical sense” where the realm of the dead is an invisible “non-spatial” realm.³⁷⁴ It seems the motivating factor for this metaphorical view is that he assumes a Cartesian nature of souls as non-extended.³⁷⁵ Souls exist in a Cartesian realm that has times that map to our times but is not a spatial region. Since Cartesian dualism is true, how else would the biblical authors be able to speak of the descent than by using analogical terminology like a physical descent? All of the spatial language regarding the descent is just metaphorical talk, forced upon biblical authors and the church by a lack of concepts to be able to say “You have brought me from the region that is temporal and not spatial.” It is a region but not a space-time region. It is akin to a non-located mental state. So, for those of the partially metaphorical position, Jesus descends to a “spatially metaphorical” location. If this partially metaphorical understanding of the descent is true, my first argument against substance dualism will fail since Jesus doesn’t actually go *somewhere*. But before exploring the metaphysical theories of human persons and their compatibility with a literal descent, I must show that the partially metaphorical version is problematic.

While a partial metaphorical interpretation would remove the need for Jesus to go somewhere it still several problems. The first problem is this: intuitively on most realist frameworks—frameworks that most Christians, including Emerson, accept—everything that is *anywhere* has a location.³⁷⁶ Therefore, there is no such thing as nonspatial realities *where* something can be located. It is not merely physicists and philosophers that hold to this view but biblical studies scholars also affirm that everyone must be somewhere.³⁷⁷ While there is lively debate as to the existence of voids, these would not allow a place for angels, demons, or souls to exist no matter their constitution. Additionally, it is likely metaphysically impossible for even mental states to exist unlocated since they too likely possess location. For example, consider Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) who contends for mental events to be in space as well.³⁷⁸ Furthermore, the idea that there are entities without

³⁷¹ Emerson, *He Descended to the Dead*, 132–33.

³⁷² Emerson, *He Descended to the Dead*, 30fn32.

³⁷³ Emerson, *He Descended to the Dead*, 136–37.

³⁷⁴ Emerson, *He Descended to the Dead*, 123–24.

³⁷⁵ Emerson, *He Descended to the Dead*, 123fn1.

³⁷⁶ Josh Parsons, “Theories of Location,” in *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*, ed. Dean W Zimmerman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 205.

³⁷⁷ Schreiner, *The Body of Jesus*, 8.

³⁷⁸ Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Matter* (London: Routledge, 2014), 384.

location is an “extraordinary view, historically speaking” according to Robert Pasnau. He claims, “For almost the whole history of philosophy, going all the way back to ancient times and forward to Hobbes’s own contemporaries, it was commonly supposed that whatever exists exists somewhere.”³⁷⁹ For example, Plato argues that “everything that exists must of necessity be somewhere, in some place and occupying some space...”³⁸⁰ And it is the standard view among chief figures such as Augustine, Anselm, and nearly all the leading scholastics.³⁸¹ Therefore, everything, whether immaterial or material, has location.³⁸² And if everything has location, including souls, then the underworld must be located as well. If it weren’t located, my soul wouldn’t be able to exist there. And if located, even if in a Cartesian realm, it would still need to change location.

The second problem is this: if the Cartesian realm is a non-located point, what is the difference between heaven and hell? It is rather absurd to think one could exist as a soul in a Cartesian realm and have no material difference between heaven and hell. There would be billions of unlocated souls, nowhere, yet experiencing heaven and hell. Metaphysically, there is nothing wrong with this. But many will find such an idea outlandish given the degree of pleasure and pain experienced simultaneously without location. Are we really to think that billions of people are experiencing diametrically opposed phenomenal experiences all while being absolutely nowhere together? Surely there must be a metaphysical story to explain how these different experiences can be had all while being nowhere. But we needn’t have such a sophisticated story to explain other models wherein location is simple and straightforward.

Finally, the third problem is this: a metaphorically located underworld (i.e., a non-located underworld) is in contradiction with various other dogmatic beliefs such as the ascension. If heaven is an unlocated mental state and Jesus was embodied in his ascension (which none deny—especially no one committed to Conciliar Christology), he couldn’t *go* to heaven if he remained embodied. He would need to become disembodied in some very strange manner to ascend to heaven. But then, even the language of *ascending to* would be extremely misleading. Those that affirm the literal ascension (this includes those that believe Conciliar Christology is true) are required to understand heaven as located in some sense. And if heaven is located, then the underworld is too. Therefore, I take it that anyone that understands the descent in a literal manner, *in any sense*, must understand the underworld to be located and believe that a spatially located entity can *go* there.

³⁷⁹ Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes*, 328.

³⁸⁰ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. Robin Waterfield, Oxford World’s Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 52b.

³⁸¹ Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes*, 337; Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J. L. Menuge, and J. P. Moreland, “Substance Dualism and Its Physicalist Rivals,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, ed. Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J. L. Menuge, and J. P. Moreland, Blackwell Companions to Philosophy (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2018), 9; Inman, “Omnipresence and the Location of the Immaterial,” 168.

³⁸² Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes*, 328.

5.3 A Survey of Alternative Metaphysical Options for a Literal Descent

So far my argument has largely been structured around the reasons those committed to (at least) Conciliar Christology have motivation to affirm a literal descent and whether substance dualism has the resources to make sense of this. I've argued Cartesian substance dualism does not have the ability to make sense of a literal descent because the soul cannot descend and cannot act in the underworld, both of which are necessary aspects of a literal descent. In what follows I now examine in greater detail the ability of alternative models to meet the desiderata of a literal descent. I explore non-Cartesian models of substance dualism to understand whether it remains a live option for a different sort of substance dualism to cohere with the descent. Further, examining each philosophical model in detail will provide greater clarity into whether a literal descent is even viable for any theory of the philosophy of mind. If it is not viable for any view in the philosophy of mind at all then no amount of theological motivation in favor of a literal descent will be sufficient to require a literal descent and then substance dualists should not worry about this particular theological view.

5.3.2 Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism on the Descent

While Cartesian substance dualism is the most common form of dualism today and usually assumes that immaterial entities lack location without argument, this is not the only option, nor the only historically attested option.³⁸³ There is the non-Cartesian substance dualism that thinks the soul is spatially located (either extended or non-extended). And if non-Cartesian substance dualism can overcome the two main objections I've presented then it is not true that anyone committed to a literal descent must reject substance dualism. They must reject *Cartesian* substance dualism but not substance dualism in general.

Non-Cartesian substance dualism is compatible with a soul that is located either as a spatially extended object or an unextended simple point. Those inclined to Cartesianism will likely find the latter alternative preferable. However, the soul as a located unextended simple point is susceptible to several potential problems. First, a world of unextended point sized souls would mean the underworld were similarly an unextended point. This would then mean that potentially billions of souls were all located at the exact same unextended point. But this is absurd. If souls are spatially located, it is not clear why they wouldn't be subject to the same sort of spatial exclusion principles we associate with every other spatially located object. Most take the essential mark of the spatial as competition for space.³⁸⁴ No two objects can be exactly located at the same place. My body cannot be located in the exact same place as my desk, for example. It is an essential part of our concept of space that no two objects can completely overlap in location. Therefore, it would be impossible for billions of souls (or even just *two* souls) to be located in the underworld together.³⁸⁵ But what if the underworld were a

³⁸³ Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes*, 332; Goetz and Taliaferro, *A Brief History of the Soul*, 16.

³⁸⁴ Colin McGinn, *Consciousness and Its Objects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 98.

³⁸⁵ Turner, "On Two Reasons Christian Theologians Should Reject The Intermediate State," 134–35.

series of unextended points, one for each soul? This may be even more absurd, to think that there are billions of unextended hell-sized points! But if the underworld remains extended despite the point-sized nature of souls (hence, denying the entailment relation from the location of souls to the location of the underworld), this isn't a problem. Moreover, spatial overlapping may take place. For example, electrons in a single shell in an atom occupy the same volume. Photons also coincide exactly in the coherent light of a laser. While it may sound absurd that two things can be in the same place at the same time, there is evidence to the contrary.³⁸⁶ Maybe the mark of the immaterial is that something can be co-located in this way, "overlapping" spaces. Certainly, few object to the idea that the statue and the lump of clay are exactly located in the same space. Further, the theist is already committed to demons and there are examples of them "overlapping" bodies such as the legion of demons in Mark 5. Maybe these would calm worries.

But there is a second potential problem. As J. T. Turner claims, an unextended simple point is a geometrical point which may very well lack an explanation. Therefore, souls as unextended simple points should be rejected.³⁸⁷ But again, this would require things like photons or electrons to be abstract objects despite being material particles which appears more absurd than overlapping objects. However, others have suggested that point particles are physically impossible because they would have to have infinite density being a finite mass in zero volume. If matter is continuous and extended bodies have finite mass then mass is distributed not as punctual but over a region with density.³⁸⁸ A further problem for point sized simples is that if they do exist, there couldn't be just one spatially extended object in the entire world which is an absurd conclusion. The reason is this: if simples are unextended points, then no extended object is a simple. If the only object in the universe is an extended object it must then be composed of two or more parts. But if this is the case, there is not a single object in the universe. There are now three, the spatially extend object and its two or more proper parts.³⁸⁹

There are many interesting and important metaphysical issues at play regarding the nature and/or possibility of unextended simples in the material universe (as can be seen from the previous dense paragraph) but suffice to say it's all quite controversial. Whatever one makes of the plausibility of unextended simple souls, non-Cartesian substance dualism does not rest on it. The soul could be spatially extended but *wholly multi-located*. On this view, immaterial things, like souls, have a different *mode* of location than wholly material things. Whereas material things are partly located at distinct places (each part takes up space that is less than the whole and the part is never identical to the whole), immaterial things have the ability to be wholly "multi-

³⁸⁶ Peter Simons, "Extended Simples: A Third Way Between Atoms and Gunk," *The Monist* 87, no. 3 (2004): 379.

³⁸⁷ Turner, "On Two Reasons Christian Theologians Should Reject The Intermediate State," 136.

³⁸⁸ Simons, "Extended Simples: A Third Way Between Atoms and Gunk," 373.

³⁸⁹ Ned Markosian, "Simples," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 76, no. 2 (June 1998): 219, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00048409812348361>.

located.”³⁹⁰ The immaterial can be wholly multi-located since each “part” is identical to the whole.³⁹¹ As Goetz and Taliaferro define it, “the soul is present in its entirety at one time, not only in the entire space that is occupied by its body, but also in each of the sub-regions of space that are occupied by that body’s parts.”³⁹² This view is typically called “holenmerism” and has a vast historical pedigree, being embraced by most premodern thinkers, including the leading figures of scholasticism such as Bonaventure, Aquinas, Scotus, Ockham, and Buridan.³⁹³ Not until the advent of the 18th century did holenmerism fall out of favor, being replaced by “nullibism” which claims that immaterial things are not located.³⁹⁴

Holenmerism is the claim that the soul is wholly multi-located at every place the body is located. For each sub region of the body r , the soul is wholly located there without remainder. At time t it is simultaneously wholly located in the hand, head, foot, and so on. As Thomas Aquinas says, the soul “exists in the whole body and in each part of the body.”³⁹⁵ Therefore, for a holenmeric soul to be multi-located is for it not only to be located at two or more distinct places but for it to be wholly located at both without remainder. It can have no parts that are located elsewhere. Such a construction requires the soul to be an extended simple since anything with parts will have no ability to be wholly multi-located in such a fashion. It is the very nature of an object with parts is for the parts to be located in distinct places *with* remainder. Therefore, to be wholly multi-located something must not only be extended (to be in two or more locations simultaneously) but also simple (to lack parts). An object is an extended simple if and only if it is extended through space but lacks proper parts. Some more modern thinkers have called this mode of presence “entending.”³⁹⁶

To make sense of the locution “wholly located” it is important to examine several senses of location. I take location to be a primitive concept. For example, when I say “I’m in the dugout” or “I’m in my house” or “I’m in the dining hall” I am located at each place.³⁹⁷ Given this, I define several further senses of location as follows:

Exact Location: x is exactly located at p =_{df} x is located at p if and only if x has the same shape and size as p and stands in the same spatial relations to other entities as p .

Entire Location: x is entirely located at p =_{df} x is located at p and there is no place outside of p at which x is located.

³⁹⁰ Inman, “Omnipresence and the Location of the Immaterial,” 184; Goetz and Taliaferro, *A Brief History of the Soul*, 43.

³⁹¹ Inman, “Omnipresence and the Location of the Immaterial,” 191.

³⁹² Goetz and Taliaferro, *A Brief History of the Soul*, 43.

³⁹³ Pasnau, *Metaphysical Themes*, 337.

³⁹⁴ Edward Slowik, “Cartesian Holenmerism and Its Discontents: Or, on the ‘Dislocated’ Relationship of Descartes’s God to the Material World,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 57, no. 2 (2019): 236, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hph.2019.0024>.

³⁹⁵ Aquinas, *The Treatise on Human Nature*, I 76.8c.

³⁹⁶ Alexander R. Pruss, “Omnipresence, Multilocation, the Real Presence and Time Travel,” *Journal of Analytic Theology* 1, no. 1 (May 2013): 68; Inman, “Omnipresence and the Location of the Immaterial,” 177.

³⁹⁷ Parsons, “Theories of Location,” 204.

Partial Location: x is partly located at $p =_{df}$ x has a proper part entirely located at p .

Whole Location: x is wholly located at $p =_{df}$ x is located at p and there is no proper part of x not located at p .

Multi-Location: x is multi-located at $p1$ and $p2 =_{df}$ x is wholly located at two or more distinct places, $p1$ and $p2$.³⁹⁸

Note initially the distinction between being entirely located somewhere and being partly located somewhere. If I am entirely located in the baseball dugout, no part of me could be located anywhere else. If I am partly located in the baseball dugout, it is possible that I am also partly located on the baseball field. Next, note the distinction between being entirely located somewhere and being wholly located somewhere. Being entirely located is an exclusive relationship while being wholly located is non-exclusive and is conducive to multi-location. If I am wholly located somewhere, it is possible for me to be wholly located at a distinct non-overlapping place in space. Finally, notice the mutually exclusive relationship between exact location and multi-location. If an object is multi-located it cannot be exactly located anywhere since exact location requires standing in the exact same spatial relations to the location. All of these ways of defining and describing senses of location are at times controversial. For example, depending on how one defines exact location, there may be a way that allows for multiple exact locations by treating it as primitive. But for my purposes, I use these senses of the terms. And for the purposes of defining where the soul is located at during the descent, on none of these definitions can it be unlocated. It must be located literally located somewhere.

While holenmerism may theoretically make sense alongside a literal descent, there remains the problem of the general feasibility of multi-location. Despite holenmerism's historical pedigree, it seems rather strange to posit something that could be wholly multi-located. At least if the soul is an unextended point, the concept makes sense. If spatially extended souls are metaphysically incoherent, the substance dualist will need to either deny or modify the literal *descensus* to make room for their metaphysical commitments about human persons. For example, it is puzzling how multi-location could be consistent with being wholly and entirely located exactly at a non-point sized region.³⁹⁹ This seems impossible given entire location. Nothing can be multi-located entirely at exactly two different regions. While it is possible to be *wholly* located in two places it is not possible to be *entirely* located in two places. Typically, whole and entire location "go around together." When I'm entirely in the dugout, I'm wholly in the dugout. If I reach my arm outside the dugout, I'm not entirely in the dugout because I'm also on the field or in the stands. But then I'm not wholly in the dugout either. But what

³⁹⁸ Note that some may take this final definition to better understood has having multiple exact locations. Inman, "Omnipresence and the Location of the Immaterial," 176; Nikk Effingham, "Multiple Location and Christian Philosophical Theology," *Faith and Philosophy* 32, no. 1 (2015): 26, <https://doi.org/10.5840/faithphil20153427>.

³⁹⁹ See the discussion in: Hud Hudson, "Omnipresence," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 207, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhdb/9780199596539.013.0010>.

if an extended simple (like a soul) were hovering over the dugout railing. It would be neither *entirely* in the dugout nor entirely out of it, for it would be in both. But it would be *wholly* in the dugout and outside the dugout, for it has no part except itself that is located there. Therefore, if you are an extended simple, it is possible to be wholly located in two places but not entirely located in two places.⁴⁰⁰ This again is just the idea of an extended simple which is an entity with no proper parts though its location does have proper parts.⁴⁰¹

Even so, there are several agreed upon examples of multi-location in general. For example, there are entities that wholly exist in two or more exact places. First, consider the universal *charge -1*. On some versions of universals, it is shared by all electrons and multi-located where each and every electron is located.⁴⁰² Consider next a time traveler. Imagine that twenty-two-year-old Braden is 200 pounds on May 12th, 2020 and twelve-year-old Braden is 95 pounds on May 12th, 2010. Braden, realizing how beneficial lifting weights has been for his social life decides to time travel to May 12th, 2010 and instruct his former self on the virtues of lifting weights. Thus, it is simultaneously true that Braden is 200 pounds and 95 pounds on May 12th, 2010. If this is true, multi-location is possible.⁴⁰³ This shows that things can be *exactly* located at multiple regions (though this *doesn't* say things can be exactly *and* entirely located). Finally, consider any enduring object. If it is wholly located at two distinct times, multiple location must be possible since I am wholly located at both.⁴⁰⁴

While these examples may vindicate multi-location in general, the challenge for holenmerism is not multi-location alone since it is a *sui generis* version of multi-location that requires entire location for each multi-located place. So, the problem is that the types of multi-location offered above do not require whole and entire location simultaneously. Moreover, there are other major dissimilarities such as holenmeric souls being concrete objects for the non-Cartesian substance dualist whereas universals are abstract properties.⁴⁰⁵ What needs proving is that multi-location is possible for concrete objects wholly and entirely located at each and every place they exist. While the time traveler is an example of concrete multi-location, holenmerism needs simultaneous multi-location. The most relevant potential example is on versions of the real presence of the Eucharist where Christ is wholly located on multiple alters at the Mass simultaneously.⁴⁰⁶ But given the disunity on the nature of the Eucharist, it seems this example is tentative at best. Since no exact parallels exist for what is required of a holenmeric soul, its possibility could be rightly questioned. But maybe since being

⁴⁰⁰ Parsons, "Theories of Location," 212.

⁴⁰¹ Peter Simons, "Where It's At: Modes of Occupation and Kinds of Occupant," in *Mereology and Location*, ed. Shieva Kleinschmidt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 63, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199593828.001.0001>.

⁴⁰² Inman, "Omnipresence and the Location of the Immaterial," 170; Anna Marmodoro and David Yates, "Introduction: The Metaphysics of Relations," in *The Metaphysics of Relations*, ed. Anna Marmodoro and David Yates (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁴⁰³ Effingham, "Multiple Location and Christian Philosophical Theology," 27; Nikk Effingham, "The CaML Model of Pantheism," *Religious Studies*, January 9, 2020, 3, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412519000672>.

⁴⁰⁴ Antony Eagle, "Multiple Location Defended," *Philosophical Studies* 173, no. 8 (August 2016): 2216, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-015-0605-z>.

⁴⁰⁵ Stephen Barker and Phil Dowe, "Paradoxes of Multi-Location," *Analysis* 63, no. 2 (April 2003): 106.

⁴⁰⁶ Pruss, "Omnipresence, Multilocation, the Real Presence and Time Travel."

wholly multi-located as a soul is a *sui generis* mode of location the reason there are no other examples is because nothing else exists in such a fashion (at least nothing in our purview—God and other spirits such as angels and demons would exist in a similar fashion). And for those already committed to dualism, it is probably intuitive to think the soul is wholly located throughout one's body and not just at a point sized region in the brain.

But there remains a further problem. If holoism is true, we must once again reckon with the traditional spatial exclusion principle. If any object is located exactly somewhere it can be the only object located there—nothing can overlap the exact same location. If this is true and my body is located at region *r*, then there is no way for my soul to also be located at region *r* simultaneously. But maybe bodies have space within them where the soul “takes up” these spaces and is thus located in the same location but not *exactly* the same location. Or maybe the exclusion principle is limited to kinds (or at least some kinds). For example, there can't be two statues in one place, or two lumps of clay, but there can be a lump of clay and a statue in the same place if one composes the other.

While non-Cartesian souls can avoid the location problem it is not so clear that they can avoid the action problem. Immaterial souls—even if spatially extended—do not have the capacities to act. There are no relevant causal powers available. For example, perception of the environment is tied to the physical constitution of our bodies. We must have two eyes and not one to be able to perceive depth. If I can see without my body from a geometrical point, I will not be able to perceive spatial depth. But if the soul is extended and depth perception is not specific to eyes (presumably it comes from the more general principles of triangulation where we need a second perspective to locate something precisely) then it's possible for an extended mind, if a single perspective is. But, if I lack a body altogether nothing will determine which *direction* I am looking, leading to absurd consequences.⁴⁰⁷ In order for there to be a distinction between genuinely seeing something and hallucinating I must have a position in space. It is my position in space that partly determines my visual experience. To distinguish between seeing and hallucinating you must have a spatial position.⁴⁰⁸ But what if the causal actions in the underworld are *purely* immaterial acts, like mental actions. For example, maybe when Jesus proclaimed to the members of the underworld his victory, he communicated immediately to each of their souls without any actual voice. All of the communication references in Scripture where Jesus is proclaiming messages or talking to various people are metaphorically understood. But it's entirely speculative and ad hoc to say how the physics/supernatural physics of disembodied souls would work. Therefore, it seems rather tenuous to stake the weight of a metaphysical view on something completely empirically unverifiable. We have no examples whatsoever to make sense of the way these actions may take

⁴⁰⁷ Nicholas Everitt, “Substance Dualism and Disembodied Existence,” *Faith and Philosophy* 17, no. 3 (2000): 337–38, <https://doi.org/10.5840/faithphil200017328>.

⁴⁰⁸ Everitt, “Substance Dualism and Disembodied Existence,” 339.

place. So, requiring a rejection of premise 40 from the original argument that souls can causally act without the body without any legitimate proof is not a move that seems sustainable.

5.3.3 Neo-Aristotelian Dualism and Materialism on the Descent

Many substance dualists have argued that other models like materialism fail because they cannot affirm an intermediate state, which is a necessary part of the literal doctrine of the descent. John Cooper, for example, thinks this makes it “logically impossible to confess the truth of this eschatology without admitting the existence of disembodied persons.”⁴⁰⁹ So, the apparent problem for models like materialism is this: if human persons are material without a soul *or* if their existence requires bodily existence (e.g. Neo-Aristotelian dualism views like animalistic hylemorphism), the descent appears to be impossible since it requires something that can constitute at least the psychology of Jesus to descend to the underworld while his corpse rots dead in the grave. If Jesus’ body remains dead in the grave while Jesus descends to the underworld between his death and resurrection, then the ability for other models like Neo-Aristotelian dualism and materialism to affirm the descent is *prima facie* problematic. If both are problematic then any problems substance dualism encounters are not as worrisome. But I think there are ways to avoid this problem.

The first solution one could offer is Dean Zimmerman styled fission.⁴¹⁰ If this is true, just before I die, I fission and the closest continuer to me continues to exist in the interim state in the underworld.

Unfortunately, the fission story of the descent is incompatible with the desiderata of a literal descent since the body that constitutes my identity is not in the grave after death even if I was previously connected to it. More importantly, it avoids death altogether. The reason it avoids death is that fission occurs the moment *before* death and the fissioned part that I am identical to *never* dies. Maybe the metaphysical facts are particularly difficult at this point and there is a way to make sense of the fission event and the literal descent. But I take it that if there is an alternative view that can make more sense of the claims of the literal descent it is preferable. To these options I now turn.

Maybe there is an alternative way to take fissioning. Maybe my body can be pieced back together after I die. So, I die, I fission into a corpse *and* a person in the underworld, but *later on* I am ‘fused’ back together. Such a version of descent might help since the corpse in the grave—while not identical with Jesus during his time in the underworld—is identical to him before *and* after. But while this may suffice for the unique case of Jesus and potentially be sufficient for affirming a literal descent, it has serious problems since there are others in the underworld where Jesus goes. If everyone there also must fission-fusion in this way, all of their bodies would need to be preserved. If any one of their bodies disintegrated to the point of complete destruction or

⁴⁰⁹ John W. Cooper, “The Identity of Resurrected Persons: Fatal Flaw of Monistic Anthropology,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 23 (April 1988): 23.

⁴¹⁰ Zimmerman, “The Compatibility of Materialism and Survival: The Falling Elevator Model.”

was cannibalized, they would no longer have a body. This assumes the necessity of the material body for identity or immanent causation. Even so, again, for fission cases the subject of identity never dies, which is entirely at odds with the claims of the literal descent.

An alternative to fissioning could be to claim that my entire body is transported to the underworld while my corpse in the grave is replaced with a complete simulacrum. The simulacrum descent takes its cue from Peter van Inwagen's "just-so" story where God removes the corpse at the moment of death and replaces it with a simulacrum (see chapter two for an extensive covering of this theory).⁴¹¹ While van Inwagen's story is primarily about rescuing materialism from problems with the resurrection (e.g. when a body is completely destroyed before the resurrection) I take it that it could be of great use for the descent as well. If God whisks our bodies away at death, then he could transport us to the underworld until the resurrection. It even fits far better with biblical portrayals of the underworld such as the parable of Luke 16 since the story maps literally onto what happens—their bodies are really and truly there. Lazarus quite literally has a finger that could be dipped to cool the rich man's tongue. There is no need to posit any type of ghostly "stuff" or otherwise.

But it seems there are at least three problems. First, consider the fact that Jesus must remain dead (here I am assuming a biological/medical definition of death involving the cessation of certain bodily functions). On the simulacrum thesis it appears that Jesus doesn't remain dead since his body is quickly transported to the underworld where he must be alive and able to act. The idea behind remaining dead is being biologically dead and if the body is transported and re-enlivened during the tour of the underworld it doesn't remain dead. Second, if a simulacrum were in the grave, it wouldn't be strictly identical to *Jesus'* body. While it would be an exact replica it wouldn't be his. This is problematic since the literal descent typically expects the actual body of Jesus to remain in the grave during the descent. Therefore, while the simulacrum may resolve the problem of life after death it cannot resolve a literal descent since his body doesn't remain in the grave.

But there is an even greater problem for the simulacrum that relates to the nature of the resurrection. I think the intuition is this: the Christian resurrection is supposed to be a one-time event after death. People do not resurrect multiple times. If this is true, solutions such as the simulacrum would contradict the singular nature of the resurrection. This is so because resurrection just means bringing a dead body back to life.⁴¹² If my body dies and is taken to the underworld where it must be alive and act it must count as a resurrection. And if Christ is to resurrect after three days from the grave then he is resurrected twice. But there are several examples of persons who *were* resurrected before the general resurrection at the end of time which means they will be resurrected *twice*. Lazarus was dead in the grave for four days before being resurrected by Jesus. He would later die again with the hope of final resurrection. The solution seems straightforward: affirm a partial

⁴¹¹ Inwagen, "The Possibility of Resurrection," 121.

⁴¹² Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 23.93.

resurrection of sorts sufficient for the underworld and continue to affirm a final resurrection. Thus, the simulacrum seems safe in denying the singular nature of the resurrection. But the problem of the simulacrum with the corpse of Jesus remains. Jesus's body is no longer in the grave during the descent.

Maybe a way to avoid this challenge is to offer a weak simulacrum version like offered in the third chapter. Rather than a wholesale simulacrum theory, a microscopic part of my body is transplanted into a new body. The transported part is sufficient to maintain my identity. Therefore, my "old" body remains in the grave but it's no longer "my" body since the metaphysically important part is now located elsewhere and part of a different body that is now "mine." This is virtually identical to the complete simulacrum except that it removes the heavyweight body snatching. Instead of God needing to steal away the entire corpse and replace it with an exact replica he only needs to snatch the metaphysically important part which could be microscopic and undetectable. Thus, God leaves the vast majority of the corpse in the grave undisturbed and unchanged. Such a move appears to alleviate some of the pressure from the requirement that Jesus' body remains in the grave since most of his body does remain in the grave. The only qualm I see is that the body that is in the grave no longer metaphysically constitutes his body since the metaphysically necessary part is no longer present in the corpse. I think this is likely a fatal blow but is not as problematic as the wholesale simulacrum. Therefore, a materialist may find this version amiable and worthy of creating a further imaginative defense.

But there still remains other ways to make sense of the descent. Given that Conciliar Christology affirms Jesus to be one person with two natures—one nature that is divine and one that is human—it is theoretically possible for him to simultaneously descend and remain in the grave. If Jesus, via his divine nature alone, descended to the underworld while his human nature remained a corpse in the grave then Jesus would simultaneously satisfy all aspects of the literal descent.

On this solution Jesus as God the Son in his divine nature descends to the underworld while his human nature remains in the grave. There is nothing in the *descensus* itself that stipulates what part of Jesus must descend. It only requires that the numerically identical person of Jesus descends. And since Jesus has two natures in one person, the numerically identical person Jesus can descend via his divine nature while his human nature rots in the grave, allowing materialism to simultaneously affirm their metaphysic of the human person (e.g., I am identical to my body) and a literal descent. But there remains a problem for this tidy solution for those committed to Conciliar Christology.

Conciliar Christology teaches that Christ's two natures are inseparable.⁴¹³ Therefore, if Jesus descended without his human nature, his natures are *separable*.⁴¹⁴ As Matt Emerson has suggested, this requires the

⁴¹³ Tim Pawl, *In Defense of Extended Conciliar Christology: A Philosophical Essay* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 93.

⁴¹⁴ Emerson, "Mapping Anthropological Metaphysics with a Descensus Key: How Christ's Descent to the Dead Informs the Body-Mind Conversation," 206; Pawl, *In Defense of Extended Conciliar Christology*, 93–94.

cessation of the hypostatic union.⁴¹⁵ I take this be a serious defeater for those wanting to affirm the literal understanding of the descent on this model since it makes little sense to preserve the descent at the cost of another Conciliar doctrine. However, there is a potential way to avoid this consequence. If the hypostatic union is primarily about the person of Christ assuming the requisite *parts* of the human nature and not necessarily the nature as a whole, there is a way to preserve the inseparable nature of the hypostatic union.⁴¹⁶ As Tim Pawl suggests, “While there is a permanent addition, it is not the permanent addition of a human nature, but rather of the parts of the human nature.... Provided that the component parts continue to exist during Christ’s interim state, they can remain assumed during that time.”⁴¹⁷ Pawl’s usage of “continue to exist” does not mean “remain alive” but being present without complete annihilation. So, since Jesus’ body continues to exist in the grave, there is no true separation. He continues to be inseparably united to his human nature. His assumption of his human nature is a relation that holds between his person and the *parts* of the nature and not the nature as a whole.⁴¹⁸ The seventeenth century theologian John Flavel (d. 1691) provides the following illustration to make sense of this:

A man that holds in his hand a sword sheathed, when he pleaseth, draws forth the sword; but still holds that in one hand, and the sheath in the other, and then sheaths it again, still holding it in his hand: so when Christ died, his soul and body retained their union with the divine nature, though not (during that space) one with another.⁴¹⁹

The idea here is the same as Pawl’s—the union is preserved because the person of the Son does not absolve his relation either to the divine or human nature, though the two natures themselves are in distinct locations. Separation would entail the person of the Son no longer having a human nature but in this scenario he never does lose it.

But while this solution may absolve the descent of any problems for Jesus, the God-man, the problem remains for the rest of humanity that is either already present in the underworld or will one day visit before the general resurrection. None of them have a divine nature to descend apart from their human nature! If they cannot exist apart from their bodies, and their bodies remain in the grave, the problem remains acute. Therefore, while the divine descent is sufficient to make sense of the literal descent for the person of Jesus it does nothing to help the rest of humanity.

There is one final version of the descent that may aid the non-substance dualist at this point. Consider a hylemorphic dualism that takes the soul to not be a substantial entity in its own right. One could follow a

⁴¹⁵ Emerson, “Mapping Anthropological Metaphysics with a Descensus Key: How Christ’s Descent to the Dead Informs the Body-Mind Conversation,” 206–7.

⁴¹⁶ Pawl, *In Defense of Extended Conciliar Christology*, 99.

⁴¹⁷ Pawl, *In Defense of Extended Conciliar Christology*, 110.

⁴¹⁸ Pawl, *In Defense of Extended Conciliar Christology*, 111.

⁴¹⁹ John Flavel, *The Works of John Flavel*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), 78.

universal hylemorphic account wherein any non-divine substance is composed of form and matter and at death the soul inheres in some sort of spiritual matter, whatever that may be constituted of.⁴²⁰ In virtue of this inherence the soul is located and obtains some set of causal powers. Therefore, the material body remains in the grave while the soul still descends and is truly located there with a set of causal powers.

5.4 Conclusion

The descent clause of the Apostles' and Athanasian Creed is a required affirmation for any Christian bound by Conciliar teaching. It is at minimum a significant desideratum for the Christian faith. Therefore, it ought to be affirmed by Christians if possible. However, the descent poses problems for our models of the human person. If the literal descent is true, Jesus must remain dead in the grave and simultaneously descend to the underworld and perform actions before his resurrection. But such a belief is at odds with most understandings of the human person. Given materialism and the necessity of bodies, it seems outright impossible for this doctrine to be coherent. Given the majority opinion of substance dualism that persons are identical to a non-spatial soul, it also seems outright impossible for the doctrine to be coherent since the souls couldn't descend *anywhere*. I have attempted to propose several solutions for both anthropological paradigms.

If someone is partial to substance dualism, they must at the very minimum give up a nonspatial soul. But then they must make sense of the coherence of hylomerism. If someone finds materialism more appealing, they must be willing to either accept divine miracles for every death that has ever happened or the odd consequence that there is no solution for the descent of humanity, though there is one for Jesus. Whatever model one takes, the literal descent poses serious problems. If there is a solution to maintaining a literal descent with our metaphysical constitution as human persons, we must be more creative, more elastic, and more charitable.

⁴²⁰ Tim Pawl, "Scholastic Hylomorphism and Dean Zimmerman," *TheoLogica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology* 8, no. 2 (September 27, 2023): 10, <https://doi.org/10.14428/thl.v8i2.80713>.

6 - TWO NATURES (STILL) DOESN'T ENTAIL

TWO PERSONS: A MATERIALLY NEW DEFENSE

OF CONCILIAR CHRISTOLOGY

6.1 Introduction

Recent analytic research on the nature of the incarnation has led some to worry afresh about the coherence and consistency of Conciliar Christology—particularly that what R. T. Mullins calls “neo-Chalcedonian” Christology (he defines this as the more developed Christology after the council of Chalcedon, though given the various usages of this term, I avoid it). One recent example is from Mullins who has re-popularized the so called “Two Sons Worry” that, according to him, has never been properly resolved.⁴²¹ Mullins suggests that a commitment to Conciliar Christology entails that there are two persons in the incarnation. But two persons in the incarnation is supposed to be outlawed as formal heresy, commonly going by the name of Nestorianism. Therefore, a supposed dilemma arises between (1) maintaining Conciliar Christology despite its entailment of formal heresy and (2) revising Conciliar Christology to avoid the Two Sons Worry. But neither of these options is appealing for those committed to Conciliar Christology. Because of the potentially unsavory conclusion I develop a fresh argument that concludes the dilemma, as Mullins recounts it, need not arise.

It is obviously unoriginal to defend Conciliar Christology. But my approach to defending it is somewhat original. I argue that if one rejects Cartesian substance dualist accounts of personhood and provides an alternative account of human ontology and personhood, they can avoid the implication of there being two sons and retain Conciliar Christology without revision. To prove this, I first summarize Mullins’s argument. Then I examine older accounts of personhood and the hypostatic union and why Mullins finds these accounts unhelpful. Finally, I expand on Peter van Inwagen’s model of the human person to show how it can be pressed into service of Conciliar Christology. I do not offer van Inwagen’s ontology as the only way one can defend Conciliar Christology but as a new, unlikely, and yet untested way of defense.

6.2 Mullins and the Two Sons Worry

The Two Sons Worry has a long history, especially in the patristic era of Christological debate.⁴²² The pro-Nicene fathers like Cyril of Alexandria and the Council of Ephesus both argue forcefully against two persons

⁴²¹ R. T. Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” in *Impeccability and Temptation: Understanding Christ’s Divine and Human Will*, ed. Johannes Grössl and Klaus von Stosch, Routledge Studies in Analytic and Systematic Theology (New York: Routledge, 2021), 167.

⁴²² John Behr, *The Nicene Faith: Part One True God of True God*, vol. 2, The Formation of Christian Theology (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s seminary Press, 2004), 30.

in Christ, anathemizing Nestorius (386–451), whose thought supposedly entailed two persons. Given the ecumenical agreement, most have stayed clear of, at least knowingly, resurrecting and defending the Two Sons Worry. As such, the particular misgivings highlighted by Mullins aren't always addressed specifically in standard defenses of Conciliar Christology. But whatever defenses exist, Mullins surmises that the problem has never been “properly resolved.”⁴²³

6.2.1 The Person-Nature Conditional

Tim Pawl, in his seminal defense of Conciliar Christology, reviews several critics who press one of the key worries that Mullins highlights, indicating numerous times that the worry is claimed but never argued for. He suggests that they all fundamentally accept what he calls the “Person-Nature Conditional.” Before explaining the conditional, I should remind us of what is meant by person and nature. I'll start with person.

x is a person $\equiv_{\text{def}}$ x is an independent subsistence of a rational nature

“Subsistence,” again, is a technical term for a substance that exists in and through itself and not in another.⁴²⁴ As Pawl glosses it, an independent subsistence must be “a complete being, incommunicable by identity, not apt to inhere in anything, and not sustained by anything.”⁴²⁵ So, persons are not only independent subsistences, like lions, beavers, and crocodiles, they are also of a rational nature. This is strictly a metaphysical and not a psychological definition. The modern traits predicated of persons that others, like Mullins, assume (e.g., first person perspective, beliefs, etc.) are not included in this definition. If one thinks they *should* be included in the definition, they are welcome to include them here but for the sake of argument I use the more traditional and lightweight definition (though, as I will argue later, I think importing psychological categories is part of the problem).

But as you can see, personhood assumes a prior working definition of “nature.” Being an independent subsistence *of a rational nature* requires explication as well. As a reminder, I take it that nature is the generic term for what the contemporary philosophical literature calls natural kinds (e.g., there are kinds “God” and “man”). Natural kinds are classifications or categories that correspond to the objective “joints” in nature.⁴²⁶ They form a general taxonomy from which we can group various objects as “like” one another. These taxonomies correspond to nature in that they reflect what is natural and not merely what is grouped by the human intellect. These are often deeply intuitive generalizations. As such, natural kinds are more privileged than other categories.

⁴²³ Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” 167.

⁴²⁴ Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 16.

⁴²⁵ Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology*, 32.

⁴²⁶ Ney, *Metaphysics*, 137.

Therefore, ‘human’ is a natural kind. It includes a wide range of individuals ranging from Barack Obama to Donald Trump to Winston Churchill. They are all members of the kind “human” because they resemble one another in their human nature. Similarly, polar bear is a natural kind since it carves nature at its joints. Grizzly bears, black bears, lions, and tigers are not members of the natural kind polar bear because they lack the essence of what it is to be a polar bear. They are not white bears that thrive in freezing climates (of course, whatever the essence of a polar bear is, this not likely being it, is a matter for zoologists to settle). Non-natural kinds, in contrast, are imposed from without. For example, when I look to purchase a pickup truck and search for only those within a specific price range, this is a non-natural kind. This range, or category, is artificial and not naturally occurring or discoverable. It only reflects my current interests or needs. Whereas the natural kind human or *Tyrannosaurus Rex* is naturally occurring and discoverable. Their reality exhibits naturally specifiable joints that are intelligible and epistemically justified.⁴²⁷

Given these definitions, the meaning of the “Person-Nature Conditional” can better be understood. It identifies persons with natures. So, if x is one person then x has one (and no more) nature(s). It is metaphysically impossible to be one person with more than one nature. For Christology this means that if Christ is only one person then Christ has only one nature. But since Conciliar Christology says there are two natures then there is not one person—there are two! So, for example, this conditional motivates the heresies from Apollinaris and Eutyches. They accept the conditional and so Apollinaris denies that the soul exists (in an attempt to deny that there is a second person since souls go with natures) and Eutyches denies two natures.⁴²⁸ Here you can see the reason for accepting the conditional. It appears to equate natures with persons. Enter R. T. Mullins and his refreshed version of the problem.⁴²⁹

6.2.2 Mullins on Two Persons

As Mullins explains it, the Two Sons Worry results from a conjunction of claims that stem from Conciliar Christology. Mullins rightly understands that Conciliar Christology is constrained by classical beliefs about God in general (things like divine simplicity, immutability, and impassibility), which motivates a compositional account of Christology (e.g., Christ has a divine nature “part” and a human nature “part” that is itself composed of two parts, the body and the soul). It is constrained by these beliefs since the divine nature is incapable of suffering and change and the entire human nature (including some consciousness that can bear the suffering apart from the divine) is needed for the suffering and change that obviously occurs to the Christ.⁴³⁰ But Mullins thinks that the Son assuming a human nature—especially a human soul—entails two

⁴²⁷ Inman, *Substance and the Fundamentality of the Familiar: A Neo-Aristotelian Mereology*, 21.

⁴²⁸ Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology*, 215.

⁴²⁹ However, Mullins curiously does not cite Pawl’s work in this essay despite his claim that the problem has never been resolved.

⁴³⁰ Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” 166–67.

persons on the standard account of human personhood assumed in Conciliar Christology. Therefore, there is a contradiction.

While there are various ways the problem has been formulated Mullins advances what he calls “one form of the argument” from Eunomius as follows:

A human person is a soul and body. If the Son assumed a soul and a body, the Son assumed a human person. So there are two sons (two persons) in the incarnation. That is heresy.⁴³¹

The format from Mullins’s argument at this point is rather basic:

46. A human person is identical to a saliently connected soul and body

47. If the Son assumed a saliently connected soul and body, then the Son assumes a human person

48. Therefore, there are two persons in the incarnation

But this seems far too quick. There appear to be several suppressed premises that will need to be explored before advancing further.

First, it seems clear that something must be said about the second person that results in the conclusion. The argument as it stands assumes that the Son is *already* a person that would then add a *distinct* second person if a saliently connected soul and body were assumed. The idea is that since the divine Son is essentially a person (i.e., He is a person irrespective of and “prior to” the incarnation) the Son must also be a person ‘in the incarnation’ and if the Son assumes a saliently connected soul and body ‘in the incarnation’ then this is *another* person ‘in the incarnation.’ Hence, two persons. Mullins also needs the relatively trivial premise that either the Son isn’t identical to the saliently connected body and soul or the premise that if x ‘assumes’ y then x is distinct from y . The reason these should be highlighted is because they’re the two suppressed premises that are doing the work here.

6.2.3 Expanding on Mullins

Given the suppressed premises it is helpful to expand the argument from Mullins further, at least as I would understand it. While there are various ways one could then construe the problem, it is important to remember that Mullins gestures to Eunomius as a key henchman. Unfortunately, it is unclear from Mullins’s citation of Eunomius what his argument is. From the section he cites, the only relevant claim by my lights is as follows:

Who in these last days was born in the flesh, born of a woman, born a man for the freedom and salvation of our race, yet not taking upon him ‘the man’ made up of body and soul.⁴³²

⁴³¹ Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” 167.

⁴³² Eunomius, *The Extant Works*, trans. Richard Paul Vaggione (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 155–57.

It appears that Eunomius asserts that the Son did not take ‘the man’ made of body and soul which, based on Mullins’s retelling, is because if he were to take on ‘the man’ then there would be two persons in Christ, which is incomprehensible.⁴³³ However, neither Mullins’s nor Eunomius’s argument is expanded enough to clearly follow all the premises that one might reject if given to affirming conciliar dogma. Therefore, I expand what I consider to be Mullins’s Eunomoian argument in full. In what follows I introduce talk of “assumption.” By it I mean the following:

Assumption: The event of the Son’s uniting a human nature to his person at some time t .

The result of this event is the beginning of the existence of a state of affairs, the state of affairs of the Son’s having a human nature in addition to the divine nature. But for now, talk of assumption is a reference to the incarnation event proper wherein the Son “assumes” a human nature in addition to his divine nature. Now, to Mullins’s argument:

- 49. If x is a saliently connected body and soul, then x is a human person.
- 50. At t the Son assumes a saliently connected body and soul.
- 51. Therefore, at t the Son is a human person. [46,47]
- 52. If x assumes y , then x is distinct from y .
- 53. Therefore, at t the Son is distinct from a human person. [48,49]
- 54. The divine Son is essentially a person prior to, and irrespective of, the incarnation.
- 55. Therefore, at t there are two persons. [50,51]
- 56. There is exactly one person ‘in the incarnation’ [Premise from Conciliar Christology]
- 57. Contradiction. [52,53]

By my lights, the most obvious premise to deny from this version of the argument is (49). Every saliently connected body and soul isn’t *identical* to a human person. Mullins merely assumes that a person is “a soul that has a capacity for consciousness, a first-person perspective, and intentional action.”⁴³⁴ But if we reject the assumption that a soul (and body) is identical to a person, then the argument doesn’t run. And it is well known that classical, medieval, and pre-Cartesian accounts of personhood can radically differ from this conception of personhood. For this reason, requiring a different account of personhood than what Conciliar Christology would assume is a dubious form of argumentation. I will prove that this is the case in section 5.3 on premodern personhood. But Mullins seems to think it is necessary to accept (49) given other classical commitments within Conciliar Christology. This is where Mullins’s argument becomes especially unique. He adds the unity of consciousness and divine impassibility as a foil to traditional forms of defense.

⁴³³ Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” 166.

⁴³⁴ Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” 172.

6.2.4 The Unity of Consciousness, Divine Impassibility, and Two Sons

Mullins thinks that if Conciliar Christology is to avoid the Two Sons Worry it must give an account of the hypostatic union that “clearly” explains how Jesus remains one person and not two.⁴³⁵ The problem, says Mullins, is that an account that *could* avoid the problem *isn’t* available since those that affirm Conciliar Christology are committed to a sort of Platonic or Cartesian dualism (though, this claim is dubious, as I have suggested) and classical doctrines like dyothelitism and divine impassibility which entail a *disunity of consciousness* which cannot account for a single person. While Conciliar theology may verbally claim there is a singular person, it is logically impossible given its other commitments that entail a “deep phenomenal disunity.”⁴³⁶ So, whether souls (and bodies) are identical to persons or not is irrelevant if the Son experiences disunity to the extent that we should think there are two persons and not one.

By “deep phenomenal disunity” Mullins is drawing on contemporary work on the unity of consciousness to argue that where there is a disunity of consciousness, there must be two persons and not one. Persons, by definition, must have a unity of consciousness. The account explicitly offered and endorsed in the sixth ecumenical council requires the Son to have two wills. Therefore, since we find “two unique perspectives” (e.g., two wills) in the Son on Conciliar accounts, there are two persons and not one.⁴³⁷ For example again, if there are two natures in the incarnation that are non-identical (which is true—there is the divine and human) then there must be two persons (i.e., “subjects”) apart from a positive account of “ontic unity.” The classical formulations of “two minds” or “two wills” (commonly called by its Latin term, *dyothelitism*), intuitively entails two persons *by itself* since nothing could be a single person with *two minds or wills*. That requires too much disunity for a single subject. Therefore, without a clear explanation for “ontological unity” Conciliar accounts provide merely “functional” or “semantic” unity which is “disastrously ambiguous” and “not a genuine hypostatic union.”⁴³⁸

Mullins recounts the work of Tim Bayne and his various models of conscious unity to show this to be the case. There is no standard account of unity that a Conciliar theologian could pick out as consistent with their model of the incarnation. For Bayne, there is subject unity wherein conscious states are had by the same subject, representational unity wherein there is a unity of objects or intentional contents, and phenomenal unity, wherein there is a conjoint experiential character.⁴³⁹ Bayne then argues that a unity of consciousness means all states are subsumed by a single conscious state which is the subject’s total consciousness.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁵ Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” 167.

⁴³⁶ Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” 177.

⁴³⁷ Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” 174–75.

⁴³⁸ Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” 169.

⁴³⁹ Tim Bayne, *The Unity of Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 9–11.

⁴⁴⁰ Bayne, *The Unity of Consciousness*, 16.

But it is not merely the existence of two minds and wills that entails two persons. Mullins thinks there are intentional acts that the human mind or will does that are inaccessible to the divine mind or will “on pain of confusing the natures and wills of Christ.”⁴⁴¹ For example, if Jesus Christ as man does not know the day or the hour of an event and yet as divine Son he does, then there is a deep disunity that entails two persons. How could it be that a single person could both know and not know a fact simultaneously? That is absurd. So, if we take Bayne’s work as representative, for a subject to be unified, “the contents of a each of a creature’s conscious states are available to the same range of cognitive and behavioral systems.”⁴⁴² But this doesn’t appear to be the case here. That’s why Mullins thinks no model of the unity of consciousness can map onto Conciliar accounts since “if in Jesus Christ there are two minds, each with their own will, that quite obviously entails two persons.”⁴⁴³ Therefore, if there are two wills or two minds there must be two persons. The argument could be presented roughly as follows:

- 58. If x has a divine nature, then x has a divine ‘mind’ and ‘will’
- 59. If x has a human nature, then x has a human ‘mind’ and ‘will’
- 60. At t the divine Son assumes a human nature
- 61. Therefore, at t the Son assumes a numerically distinct ‘mind’ and ‘will’ [58,59,60]
- 62. If x is one person, then x must have a unified ‘mind’ and ‘will’
- 63. If x has a unified ‘mind’ and ‘will’, then all of x ’s consciousness states must be within x ’s total consciousness
- 64. At t the divine mind and will know and will *different* things than the human mind and will
- 65. Therefore, at t there are numerically distinct and non-unified minds and wills which are identical to distinct persons [61,62,63,64]

Instead of drawing on the identity of souls and bodies with persons as premise 49 of the original argument did, this draws on the impossibility of having more than one set of “soulish” properties, like mind and will (however one ontologically classifies them), without entailing two persons.

But Bayne himself suggests there can be phenomenal unity while having access disunity. It may even be *reasonable* to think there is access disunity, even high degrees of it, while having phenomenal unity.⁴⁴⁴ Therefore, there is reason to doubt at least premise 63. Trenton Merricks has recounted one such example in his defense of the Trinity. He details how real examples of brain bisections result in two distinct “spheres of

⁴⁴¹ Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” 177.

⁴⁴² Bayne, *The Unity of Consciousness*, 107–8.

⁴⁴³ Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” 175.

⁴⁴⁴ Bayne, *The Unity of Consciousness*, 109.

consciousness” and yet only one person remains.⁴⁴⁵ These are *real* examples and not merely philosophical musings. Therefore, premise 63 is certainly false as it stands, at least as a defeater to Conciliar Christology.

But if divine impassibility is brought to the fore, there seems no clear way to avoid a disunity that is even deeper than distinct spheres of consciousness that may not know bits of information. For example, the content of the human mind of Christ cannot serve as the basis for the divine mind’s decisions without violating impassibility since impassibility eliminates any receptivity outside the divine nature itself.⁴⁴⁶ If the divine mind were to base a decision, any decision, on the human mind this would require it to be dependent on something besides the divine nature. Likewise, how could one person both suffer and not suffer? If the divine nature is impassible and the human nature is passible doesn’t this mean the Son is *both* impassible and passible? That is absurd. Impassibility, then, is supposed to be a stronger defeater for any possible unity than other examples like knowledge. Let me explain.

Some background material is useful to understand what Mullins is up to here. He repeatedly emphasizes the pro-Nicene desire to maintain divine impassibility (e.g., the belief that the divine nature is impervious to suffering—it literally cannot receive anything external to itself on pain of being damaged in any way).⁴⁴⁷ Mullins is right to indicate that the commitment to divine impassibility is the primary fountainhead of Christological incoherence.⁴⁴⁸ Everyone—Arian and pro-Nicene alike—affirm that Christ suffers in the incarnation. But, according to Mullins, the Arians argued that the Son only assumed a human body and not an immaterial soul (their reasoning being that two souls would entail two Sons since souls are persons by identity).⁴⁴⁹ But on the classical scheme, since God is impassible and Christ suffers, the incarnation requires a human soul in addition to a human body that can experience the suffering *instead of* the divine nature. This “instead of” relation is much stronger than a lack of knowledge. It seems to entail the necessity of a second subject. What is needed is a human mind and will to bear the suffering so as to protect the divine nature.⁴⁵⁰ Hence, a “three-part” Christology that is dualist in nature is required (i.e., Christ has a divine nature “part” and a human nature “part” that is itself composed of two parts, the body and the soul).⁴⁵¹

Though, it is not clear to me that a two-part Christology would absolve any of the worries Mullins thinks a three-part Christology generates. For example, Cyril thinks divinity is impassible because it is incorporeal.

⁴⁴⁵ Trenton Merricks, “Split Brains and the Godhead,” in *Knowledge and Reality: Essays in Honor of Alvin Plantinga*, ed. Alvin Plantinga et al. (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006), 308–11.

⁴⁴⁶ Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” 176.

⁴⁴⁷ Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” 165.

⁴⁴⁸ Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” 167.

⁴⁴⁹ Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” 166. It should be noted that this re-telling isn’t quite right historically speaking. There is no codified “Arian” group and this criticism is more akin to Apollinarian readings than any so-called “Arian” group. But for the purposes of this essay, careful historical exegesis is not as relevant. Whether any Arian actually advanced such an argument is a moot point. If there is an incoherence, it is a problem.

⁴⁵⁰ Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” 167.

⁴⁵¹ Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” 166–67.

Therefore, the impassible one suffers through his body.⁴⁵² But this would entail that there was no technical need for a three-part Christology due to impassibility. Regardless, for the sake of argument I will assume it does. But keep in mind that I take Mullins's target of a three-part Christology to encompass *any* form of compositional Christology that understands Christ as having a complete human nature. God incarnate is then a whole composed of the proper parts of God the Son and the parts of his human nature.⁴⁵³

So, it seems that the real problem Mullins is picking out is a conjunction of at least three claims: (a) suffering happens in the incarnation (b) suffering requires a non-divine subject (e.g., a person in the modern sense of the term—someone with a full set of psychological abilities) (c) persons are *identical* to a concrete instance of their nature (body and soul, or whatever the metaphysical parts are). He seems to think all three of these are required for any classical Christology, but together they create an apparently unsolvable problem. So, let me try and spell it out again in more detail:

- 66. If x has a unified 'mind' and 'will', then x experiences all that x 's 'mind' and 'will' experience
- 67. At t the Son suffers as the incarnate God-man (e.g., he becomes thirsty, he experiences pain during crucifixion, etc.)
- 68. Therefore, at t the Son's 'mind' and 'will' suffer [66,67]
- 69. If x is one person, then x must have a unified 'mind' and 'will'
- 70. If divine impassibility is true, then the divine 'mind' and 'will' of the Son do not suffer [Premise from Conciliar Christology]
- 71. Therefore, the Son is two persons at t since Son's 'mind' and 'will' are not unified (i.e., he suffers and does not suffer) [68,69,70]

So, Mullins thinks it is impassibility that is generating the need for a deep disunity between the two natures that entails two persons. A person cannot both suffer and not suffer. If one denies impassibility, it appears that Mullins thinks we can regain a sense of "ontic unity." For example, on a kenotic Christological account wherein the Son has only one mind and will, there *can* be sufficient unity. If the human nature suffers then the divine Son suffers. This is because there is only one mind and will—the divine mind and will of the Son (which is distinct from the other persons of the Trinity in this case). But without this kenotic passible God there is supposedly no way to account for ontic unity.

As noted previously, Mullins also thinks that premise 49 from the original argument is simply conciliar dogma about the metaphysics of human persons. So, apart from such a rejection there is no apparent hope. However, I argue that impassibility needn't be rejected to preserve the dogmas of Conciliar Christology.

⁴⁵² Cyril of Alexandria, "Second Letter to Nestorius," 568.

⁴⁵³ Oliver D. Crisp, "Compositional Christology without Nestorianism," in *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, ed. Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 45, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199583164.001.0001>.

Mullins's arguments are flawed. There are accounts of unity between the natures that can parry charges of "deep disunity" that would entail two persons and his presupposition of personhood is faulty. I will consider these charges in reverse order before offering an original positive proposal for how one can account for a deep "ontic unity" in the hypostatic union without two persons.

6.3 Premodern Personhood

There are two tasks I must complete here. First, I criticize Mullins's assumption that it is part of conciliar dogma to believe that saliently connected souls and bodies are identical to persons. Second, I summarize the work of Cyril of Alexandria to prove this is not the case. I utilize Cyril given his vast influence on Chalcedonian theology. If Cyril stands outside of Mullins's target, then Mullins is wrong to make various claims about the ontology of human persons for conciliar dogma like the necessity of "substance dualism." It was not, as he claims, "widely assumed in Christological debates during the early Church."⁴⁵⁴ By substance dualism Mullins is thinking of the claim that the human person is identical to the immaterial soul.⁴⁵⁵ But I take it that identifying *any* metaphysical part, like souls, or souls and bodies, with persons is really the target for Mullins (or at least should be the target). If Jesus assumes a metaphysical part of human nature (whatever it may be) that is identical to a person then there are two persons in the incarnation. That's the problem. Not necessarily substance dualism by itself.

Therefore, it would be better for Mullins to use a more generic term like 'person-part identity' wherein persons are numerically identical to their metaphysical parts (whether souls alone, saliently connected souls and bodies, or otherwise). Vanilla versions of substance dualism are commonly known for this but there are versions of substance dualism that do not include this view. Therefore, the more generic 'person-part identity' would be more difficult to avoid for the conciliar defender since the claim of identity between person and metaphysical parts generates Mullins's claim that premise 46 is necessary. And it is easier to defeat substance dualism by itself than it is to defeat a broader premise like person-part identity. Even so, I show first that substance dualism is not the shared inheritance of the conciliar faith while also showing that person-part identity lacks widespread support. Denying substance dualism is sufficient to render Mullins's argument unsound but denying person-part identity is necessary to render re-worked versions of his argument unsound.

6.3.1 Personal Identity, Immaterial Souls, and Substance Dualism: Friend or Foe?

Those like Mullins have argued that "substance dualism" is necessary for conciliar dogma. He seems to suggest that alternatives like materialism simply cannot affirm a rational soul since "the soul is identical to the body on physicalism, thus emptying any meaning to the affirmation that the soul and body are different parts

⁴⁵⁴ Mullins, "Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry," 164.

⁴⁵⁵ Mullins, "Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry," 172.

of Christ.”⁴⁵⁶ But this is hardly the case. Mullins has recourse to no creed or council to verify his claim. The conciliar creeds do not require any certain belief about what human persons or human souls are.⁴⁵⁷ To prove my point, I could merely cite the various credal formulas and the approved writings of each council. But such an approach would be a rather laborious exercise in proving the point. Instead, I will offer a summary of Cyril of Alexandria to display that there is not a complete consensus regarding human ontology, whether so-called “substance dualism” or even the more generic “person-part identity.” Therefore, my intent is not to be exhaustive. All I intend to do is show that there are some conflicting views on human ontology and personhood. If this is true, Mullins’s claim is false.

Examining the historical record indicates that substance dualism wherein the person is identical to a soul with all the modern connotations of first-person perspective and the like was *not* a ubiquitous or necessary belief amongst the pro-Nicene’s (and *especially* not during the medieval and Reformation era where a more hylemorphic account is pervasive). As Richard Swinburne has argued, what worried the church fathers was not a need for *substance dualism* but a need for a way of thinking and acting that was sufficiently like ours so that Christ could redeem it.⁴⁵⁸ Take Cyril of Alexandria as a key example since his theology is central to the Chalcedonian formulation. If Cyril can be understood as something other than a substance dualist this ought to give significant weight to rejecting Mullins’s claim of the necessity of substance dualism. For Cyril, it was the Word’s *body* that suffers.⁴⁵⁹ In discussing the nature of the incarnation, Cyril often ignores any reference to a soul:

But how could that be the case unless he himself became flesh, that is became man, appropriating a human body to himself in such an indissoluble union that it has to be considered as his very own body and no one else’s?⁴⁶⁰

This is why noted patristic scholar Christopher Beeley can say that Cyril almost “totally avoids” the human soul.⁴⁶¹ Now, to be fair, Cyril *does* mention the soul. He says that Christ did not come soulless “but rather animated with a rational soul.”⁴⁶² Elsewhere he says, “He made it his very own, and not soulless as some have said but rather animated with a rational soul, and thus he restored flesh to what it was in the beginning.”⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁶ R. T. Mullins, “Physicalism and the Incarnation Once More,” *Philosophia Christi* 23, no. 1 (2021): 206.

⁴⁵⁷ Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology*, 48–49.

⁴⁵⁸ Swinburne, *The Christian God*, 196, 252.

⁴⁵⁹ Christopher A. Beeley, *The Unity of Christ: Continuity and Conflict in Patristic Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 268; Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, 60.

⁴⁶⁰ Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, 63.

⁴⁶¹ Beeley, *The Unity of Christ*, 271.

⁴⁶² Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, 55.

⁴⁶³ Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, 55.

Again, the incarnation is “in accordance with the assumption of flesh (not a soulless flesh but one animated with an intelligent soul).”⁴⁶⁴ Humans are “flesh animated with an intelligent soul.”⁴⁶⁵ Finally:

But even though we distinguish them in mere thought and accept the difference through subtle contemplation or by the mind’s imagination, we are not positing two natures in succession, nor are we allowing someone to imagine a thorough severance of them.⁴⁶⁶

But notice that these sort of claims about the metaphysical constitution of Christ are quite flexible and appear to be more congenial to Neo-Aristotelian hylemorphic accounts than substance dualism. For example, hylemorphism can construe human nature in the same terms. Indeed, it is far more standard for a hylemorphist to say that humans are bodies animated by a rational soul. They are not distinct substances. Substance dualism simply cannot say this. Even something like an emergent dualism might be able to utilize the metaphysical story from Cyril. My point is this: almost any Aristotelian account of human nature would be acceptable by most pro-Nicene standards. If this is true, Mullins’s claim and premise 46 can (and ought) be rejected. But even more than this, and rather more important, Cyril nowhere indicates an affirmation of anything like person-part identity. And so, even a re-worked version that did not hitch its wagon to substance dualism would fail.

But even if the historical record turns out to be nearly universal in an affirmation of substance dualism, the claim of its necessity is a red herring. Many things were “widely affirmed” (using Mullins’s justification for including it as a necessary belief for Conciliar Christology) in the era of the ecumenical councils that are not necessary to believe to maintain Conciliar Christology. There is no ecumenical creedal claim that codifies any one metaphysics of human persons. While there are constraints on our theorizing (e.g., the idea of a body animated by a rational soul) there remains considerable flexibility (see section 1.6.3 for more).

Now, maybe Mullins would rather say “Fine and good. What I mean to say is that such an ontology of persons is *entailed* by Conciliar dogma itself. Thus, it needn’t be explicitly included in the creeds since it is implicitly within the premises.” If Mullins sought to go this route, I would again direct him to the historical witness and the later Conciliar developments that clearly reject the identity of souls and persons.

Constantinople III (681) is Conciliar dogma as well and argues that Christ has a second set of powers (intellect and will) that person-part identity would take to entail a second person. Yet the council clearly affirms a singular person. Certainly they had an explanation for what so many assume is a blatant contradiction.

⁴⁶⁴ Cyril of Alexandria, “Second Letter to Succensus,” 743.

⁴⁶⁵ Cyril of Alexandria, “Second Letter to Succensus,” 746.

⁴⁶⁶ Cyril of Alexandria, “Second Letter to Succensus,” 746.

6.3.2 Thick Accounts of Personhood

When faced with the Two Sons Worry in the past a distinction called the “*anhypostasias-enhypostasia*” was developed, particularly through the fifth ecumenical council at Constantinople (553), to safeguard Conciliar Christology. *Anhypostasias* means that Christ’s human nature (e.g., the saliently connected body and soul that is assumed by the divine Son in the incarnation) does not exist as a person apart from its assumption by the Word and *enyhypostasia* means that his human nature exists in a particular person and is thereby “personalized.”⁴⁶⁷ In other words, something that is *anhypostatic* lacks a *hypostasis* and something that is *enyhypostatic* is *in a hypostasis*.⁴⁶⁸ These distinctions are important as they reject the identity of persons with natures (i.e., person-part identity). They are developed to safeguard the truth that there is only one person in the hypostatic union despite the Son having two natures. The human nature, instead of being a human person (e.g., a subsistence that is self-existing), is “personalized” by the divine Son which means there is no concrete instance in existence with personhood until it is united to the person of the Son.⁴⁶⁹ This is a technical way of saying that in virtue of the assumption of the human nature to a divine person, what would normally instantiate a person does not. In every other case, when a concrete human nature comes into existence we have a new person. But not so in the case of the incarnation. This may appear to be special pleading (and maybe it is) but several reasons were provided to justify this claim.

Therefore, the distinction seeks to provide a concept of personhood that is not identical to concrete instances of human natures. Person-part identity is denied. Instead, human natures have the *capability* of constituting a person, which would deny premise 49 of the original argument. This capability is always actualized *except* in scenarios where a substance of a rational nature already exists. John Duns Scotus (1265/66–1308) is representative of this approach. He defines substance and personhood (or in his terminology “subsistence” and “suppositum”) with Christ in mind. So, for a human nature (e.g., body and soul) to be a person it must *not* be hypostatically dependent on a divine person. That’s the only condition. When it is hypostatically united, it doesn’t count as a person.⁴⁷⁰

Peter Lombard (1100–1160) likewise says: “the soul is not a person when it is united personally to another thing, but when it exists by itself.”⁴⁷¹ Therefore, in the Son’s case, since his human nature is united to an already existing person in the divine Son, his human soul and body do not compose an additional person.⁴⁷² Personhood then is a privative or negative property. Because the human nature is a dependent substance, in

⁴⁶⁷ Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, 72.

⁴⁶⁸ Cross, *Christology and Metaphysics in the Seventeenth Century*, 74.

⁴⁶⁹ Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 316–18.

⁴⁷⁰ Cross, *Christology and Metaphysics in the Seventeenth Century*, 7–8.

⁴⁷¹ Peter Lombard, *The Sentences: Book 3 On the Incarnation of the Word*, trans. Giulio Silano, Mediaeval Sources in Translation (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2007), 23.

⁴⁷² Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 81.

this case on the person of the Son, it does not constitute its own person. Richard Cross has called it dispositional dependence (i.e., it must be the case that an object depends on a subject unless prevented).⁴⁷³

Whatever one thinks of these distinctions, Mullins does not engage this sort of literature and assumes this distinction merely amounts to a constraint on theorizing and not any substantive metaphysical account of personhood.⁴⁷⁴ Maybe some worry that a route like Scotus's may look somewhat like metaphysical cheating. There really isn't an "explanation" besides the brute fact and brute facts should be avoided. But for Scotus, there *is* an explanation. It stems from the fact that no person has another person as a part, just like no husband has a husband as a part. These are not mere brute facts but explainable in terms of what a person is and husband is.⁴⁷⁵ But even if it were a brute fact, unless Mullins shows one *can't* recourse to brute claims, it's not necessarily incoherent.

But maybe Mullins would argue that the Scotist view is incoherent because it violates the 'only x and y ' principle. According to this, whether x is identical to y can only depend on x and y and nothing else. How could anything apart from x and y make any difference to their identity? The identity of x and y in this case would depend on whether they are properly related. And that would violate this principle, assuming the relation is something in addition to x or y . So, in this case, the x would be the human nature and the y would be the person. Only x (the human nature) and y (the person) should make any difference to the claim of whether x is identical to y . But the move Scotus is making violates this principle since the human nature's identity with a particular person depends on something more than x and y . It depends on whether that nature is united to the Son or not. In a different context, consider the claim that whether or not a canine nature is Rover. In this scenario, whether the canine nature (x) is identical to Rover (y) can only depend on the canine nature and Rover. How could the answer to this question depend on anything outside the canine nature and Rover?

In reply, I suspect the 'only x and y ' principle only makes sense if by identity we mean what is meant by it in contemporary analytic philosophy (strict identity, Leibniz's law, etc.). But if we're thinking in these older terms where something can have real identity while still being conceptually, virtually, formally, etc. distinct, the logic doesn't necessarily follow. Therefore, on older ways of thinking about identity the principle doesn't apply (it only applies to strict, Leibnizian identity). The violation of the principle would depend on a certain kind of identity relation between the person of Christ and his human nature that no classical Christian makes. Therefore, Mullins's intuition would be right if the original Conciliar claims assumed an account of strict identity, but this is not the case for them. Of course, I don't mean to suggest there is a strict binary between "older" ways of thinking and contemporary (the contemporary is just as variegated with many opting for

⁴⁷³ Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 118–19.

⁴⁷⁴ Mullins, "Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worries," 170.

⁴⁷⁵ My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this insight.

relative identity and the like) and if we just forsook the modern age, we could avoid these silly problems. Instead, I mean to say that some of the problems advanced in the modern milieu face challenges precisely because they assume certain accounts of identity and presume that these Conciliar statements had strict identity in mind when many did not.

But for the sake of argument, let's say that the Scotist solution does fail. Allow me to indulge the reader further, then, showing how conciliar accounts of personhood deviate otherwise from Mullins's account. First, consider Scott Williams's own account of personhood that is dependent on the medieval theologian Richard of Saint Victor (1110–1173). He argues that a person is an “incommunicable existence of an intellectual nature” where an intellectual nature just is the intellectual and will power(s) of an entity.⁴⁷⁶ On Williams's own preferred account, persons are not identical to a composite of body and soul. There is an extra “incommunicable existence” condition that must be reckoned with. Something “incommunicable,” by its very definition, cannot be shared by any other.⁴⁷⁷

Such an account is by no means abnormal. Consider again Tim Pawl's definition of both *supposit* and person. He defines a *supposit* (*hypostasis*) as follows: “X is a supposit (hypostasis) if and only if x is a complete being, incommunicable by identity, not apt to inhere in anything, and not sustained by anything.” Then he defines person in light of this as: “X is a person if and only if x is a supposit with a rational nature.”⁴⁷⁸ Like Williams, Pawl's definition of person here indicates several further conditions that would deny any sort of strict identity relation between the metaphysical component parts of a body and soul. The most important one being that a person is not sustained by anything else. As Pawl indicates elsewhere:

We can draw a distinction between a thing which is self-conscious, and that in virtue of which it is self-conscious. And likewise, we can draw a distinction between a self-consciousness understood as that in virtue of which a thing is self-conscious, and a self-consciousness understood as that which is self-conscious, or perhaps its state of being self-conscious.⁴⁷⁹

For Pawl, even normal human persons have a mind that they are not numerically identical with and yet there aren't two “things.” So even in normal cases, there can be a distinction between the person that is conscious and the thing in virtue of which the person is self-conscious. On Conciliar accounts of personhood, persons

⁴⁷⁶ Scott M. Williams, “Unity of Action in a Latin Social Model of the Trinity,” *Faith and Philosophy* 34, no. 3 (2017): 326, <https://doi.org/10.5840/faithphil20178385>.

⁴⁷⁷ Scott Williams, “Persons in Patristic and Medieval Christian Theology,” in *Persons: A History*, ed. Antonia LoLordo (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 77.

⁴⁷⁸ Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology*, 213.

⁴⁷⁹ Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology*, 224.

aren't counted by faculties (e.g., intellects or wills) but by *supposita*. Therefore, persons aren't identical to mere composites of soul and body as premise 5 would require.

One might worry here that this pushes us towards a view where Jesus isn't fully human in the way we are, because he lacks something we have (namely whatever satisfies those further conditions of personhood). But such a retort would miss the main ideas behind credal orthodoxy. Jesus shares our human nature in order to save us. He needn't share our personhood.

Consider one further explanation of personhood from William of Auxerre (1150–1231). Scott Williams narrates his understanding of personhood as having three conditions. First, a person is a particular and not a universal. Second, a person cannot be a part of a composite whole. Third, a person subsists on his own. There is no dependence on another entity for existence.⁴⁸⁰ Alexander of Hales (1185–1245) and Bonaventure (1217–1274) both capitalize on this idea from William that persons are not ontologically subordinated to another.⁴⁸¹

Given these thicker accounts of personhood it would behoove Mullins to account for them in his own argument. But what if he were to account for them and still say: “These don’t persuade me. I still want a more detailed account for why personhood can be blocked in the case of the hypostatic union but not anywhere else. This is a totally abnormal case with no prior examples. It’s *ad hoc*.” Fair enough. For example, even Oliver Crisp says that if the Son had not assumed the human nature that he did, then that human nature *would* be an individual human person. The only difference is that the Son assumed this nature which prevented it from becoming a person.⁴⁸² And Mullins quite clearly thinks such a position violates the enhypostatic/anhypostatic criterion.⁴⁸³ However, I have been unable to find any source that indicates this is true. And as has been shown here, there *are* explanations for why personhood is blocked despite having a complete individual instance of a human nature. Mullins may desire a greater justification, but he is not justified in declaring incoherence. The charge of incoherence would require showing why such accounts are more than merely *ad hoc*. But maybe the charge from Mullins better understood as saying that these accounts are not successful because of what it means to be a person. But this objection has already been engaged, suggesting that his account of personhood does not mirror the account of those in the past. With this in mind I now turn to the two accounts of union and personhood that Mullins examines.

⁴⁸⁰ Williams, “Persons in Patristic and Medieval Christian Theology,” 78.

⁴⁸¹ Williams, “Persons in Patristic and Medieval Christian Theology,” 78.

⁴⁸² Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity*, 83, fn 10.

⁴⁸³ Mullins, “Physicalism and the Incarnation Once More,” 203.

6.4 Accounts of Ontic Unity

Mullins provides two possible accounts of the hypostatic union that attempt to account for the ontological unity of the Son who can have two natures without being two persons: (1) Thomas Flint's "assumption relation" and (2) a unity of consciousness model. But Mullins rejects both. First, consider Flint's assumption relation. Flint argues that a complete human nature is a human person *unless assumed by a divine person*.⁴⁸⁴ There is nothing deeper than this. From this explanation alone, it should remind one of Scotus's account. But, given Flint's explanation, personhood becomes a contingent property of the soul, which according to Mullins is puzzling enough to dismiss without argument. It is completely odd to Mullins for personhood to not be essential.⁴⁸⁵ Furthermore, Flint says that, apart from the incarnation, the human nature of Jesus would've been a person. Mullins thinks this is problematic for Conciliar Christology since it wants to say that Christ's human nature apart from the incarnation *wouldn't* have been a person (such a claim should be flagged as contested and unclear as I've indicated earlier, but for the sake of argument I'll ignore it).⁴⁸⁶ And once more, Flint's model ends up violating classical theism because it entails a "real relation" between the divine and human nature and such real relations are supposed to be outlawed by classical theism.⁴⁸⁷ While I think Mullins misunderstands the nature of the relation and what exactly classical theism is outlawing with its prohibition on "real relations" I will assume Flint's model fails for the sake of argument.

Second, the unity of consciousness model argues that there is one person in the Son despite having two natures because of the deep unity of consciousness between the divine and human natures. While each nature has a natural will and intellect, they are in complete harmony and therefore sufficiently unified to count as one person and not two.⁴⁸⁸ But Mullins finds this incredibly implausible since according to Conciliar Christology there are two unique perspectives in Christ (two minds, two wills) and unity of consciousness requires unity between the divine and human minds. But given numerically distinct perspectives that cannot be mixed or confused this doesn't work.⁴⁸⁹ There is a disunity which is impossible for a single person.⁴⁹⁰ I have no intention of rehabilitating either of these models, though I do think it is relevant to note that Tom Morris provided several counterexamples to Mullins's claims about the unity of consciousness several decades ago that went unaddressed.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁴ Mullins, "Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry," 172.

⁴⁸⁵ Mullins, "Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry," 172.

⁴⁸⁶ Mullins, "Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry," 173.

⁴⁸⁷ Mullins, "Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry," 172–73.

⁴⁸⁸ Mullins, "Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry," 174.

⁴⁸⁹ Mullins, "Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry," 174.

⁴⁹⁰ Mullins, "Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry," 176.

⁴⁹¹ Thomas V. Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 153–62.

There is one further account that Mullins also discards, what I'll call classical ontic unity. He despairs of it because he thinks that its only answer is mysterious and incomprehensible.⁴⁹² He is no doubt correct about its mysterious nature. Cyril is quite clear that the hypostatic union is an "ineffable and mysterious concurrence into unity."⁴⁹³ For Cyril, the union:

Signifies the concurrence in one reality of those things which are understood to be united. Surely it is not only those things which are simple and homogeneous which hold a monopoly over the term 'unity'? for it can also apply to things compounded out of two, or several, or different kinds of things.⁴⁹⁴

The point to take here is that there is a real indissoluble union that can count as one reality. He further explains that:

Godhead is one thing, and manhood is another thing, considered in the perspective of their respective and intrinsic beings, but in the case of Christ they came together in a mysterious and incomprehensible union without confusion or change. The manner of this union is entirely beyond conception.⁴⁹⁵

So, yes, there is a lot of mystery here for Cyril despite his desire for a real union. But it isn't as clear what metaphysical underpinnings could underwrite such claims. And maybe this is where the Christian theologian is able to suggest there is a mystery. Certainly, Mullins won't be satisfied with such a recourse. But this is where we can recall Cyril's own analogy of the union being like the union of body and soul for the human person. Just because humans are composed of a soul and a body doesn't mean there are two human persons. In a similar but disanalogous way, in the case of the incarnation there remains one person.⁴⁹⁶ So, the human nature is both proper to him and individuated by him.⁴⁹⁷ And therefore, as Steven Duby explains, "The Son is the one who gives his humanity its incommunicability, so that it subsists in and only in him and is not communicable or proper to anyone else, which is why there is no "assumed man" or second human being involved in the incarnation."⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹² Mullins, "Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry," 168.

⁴⁹³ Cyril of Alexandria, "Second Letter to Nestorius," 567.

⁴⁹⁴ Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, 73.

⁴⁹⁵ Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, 77.

⁴⁹⁶ Cyril of Alexandria, "First Letter to Succensus," in *The Cambridge Edition of Early Christian Writings*, ed. Mark DelCogliano, trans. Matthew R. Crawford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 736, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781107449640.052>.

⁴⁹⁷ Steven J. Duby, *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism: Biblical Christology in Light of the Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022), 146.

⁴⁹⁸ Duby, *Jesus and the God of Classical Theism*, 154.

6.5 A Fresh Account of Ontic Unity

But let's say Mullins isn't swayed. He's read enough Cyril to despair at such mysterious analogies, and he wants something more robust. One could respond akin to Tim Pawl and argue that a "full analysis" of what the hypostatic union is and how it works is necessarily ineffable and shouldn't be expanded further.⁴⁹⁹ But it seems to me that this shouldn't include constructive model building—it rather should preclude dogmatic proclamations. Maybe it's like this. Maybe it's like that. But if we can give accounts that are serviceable and meet the various desiderata then we should be thankful. So, in the spirit of constructive model building, I suggest that Mullins's argument fails if one develops a model of personhood along the lines of Peter van Inwagen's material beings. I should be clear that this constructive account is what I take to be a natural extension of van Inwagen's metaphysics but is not identical. It is inspired by van Inwagen but does not follow every jot and tittle of van Inwagen's metaphysics (e.g., I see no need to accept a purely materialist account of human persons).

Therefore, I argue that if we take van Inwagen's account of composition and what it means to "have" a life there is another pathway to avoiding the Two Sons Worry (and the faulty premises highlighted previously). "Lives" are unique in the sense that at any given time there is at most *one* life and so persons do not have two lives.⁵⁰⁰ They only have one life that is a self-maintaining, well-individuated, and jealous event.⁵⁰¹ But in so developing a model from van Inwagen I do not intend to suggest that there aren't other anthropological models, particularly those akin to hylemorphism that have the same ability to avoid the problem. Rather my goal is merely to rebut the problematic premises from Mullins. Therefore, if one model is viable then the argument has been proven to be unsound.

While van Inwagen does not use the terminology of personhood and doesn't apply his account directly to problems like the Two Sons Worry, his account of composition and "lives" is congenial to it. To understand van Inwagen, it's necessary to know the context from which his account of lives comes from. He constructs his answer in response to the "special composition question" (i.e., what are the conditions a plurality of objects must satisfy if they are to compose something else).⁵⁰² For him, the condition is straightforward: a plurality of objects composes something else *if and only if* the activity of the objects composes a "life."⁵⁰³ He then defines this life as "the individual life of a concrete biological organism."⁵⁰⁴ These lives are similar to the Greek's understanding of *psuche*, though unlike Greek thought, they cannot detach themselves from the

⁴⁹⁹ Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology*, 49–50.

⁵⁰⁰ Peter Van Inwagen, *Material Beings* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 39.

⁵⁰¹ Van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, 87–92.

⁵⁰² Van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, 22.

⁵⁰³ Van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, 82.

⁵⁰⁴ Van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, 83.

physical whose activity had constituted them.⁵⁰⁵ This view of *psuche* is confirmed by historian Benjamin Blosser who says it is better translated as life principle or the totality of conscious bodily life.⁵⁰⁶ Naturally, such a definition is impossible to reconcile with my goal of defending Conciliar Christology since the divine Son isn't a biological or a physical person. But I think examining van Inwagen's further explication of lives diffuses this worry. In short, there is no need to restrict lives to purely biological organisms.

Van Inwagen goes on to further explain the concept of lives as "unimaginably complex events that are self-maintaining."⁵⁰⁷ In other words, they are self-directing events that can be traced by a continuous space-time path from the past to the present. Therefore, other self-maintaining events like the flame of a fire is not a life because it is not so self-maintained. Lives do not merely deposit or withdraw energy like a flame does. Lives take energy and *transform* it for their own purposes. As van Inwagen quips, non-lives are law abiding users of energy whereas lives are brigands.⁵⁰⁸ Lives have a sort of self-directive capability or goal-directedness, wherein they have novel causal powers, to borrow language from the neo-Aristotelians, that would not exist apart from the well-individuated event called a life. This tracks with Robert Spaemann's own work on persons, where he says that "when this something is a self-maintaining system, when its inner-outer difference arises in and for itself, not merely in relation to an external user, then we say it is 'alive.'"⁵⁰⁹

Van Inwagen lives are also "jealously" self-maintaining events. Reaching back to his discussion of composition as assuming a principle of uniqueness (meaning that the products of composition have at most one sum at any given time), self-maintaining events likewise cannot compose a second event simultaneously. As van Inwagen explains:

Could it be that, for some *xs*, those *xs* simultaneously compose two organisms? I do not see how this could be. Since lives are jealous, those two organisms would have to share the same life. But if at any given moment the same particples compose them, and if the activity of those particles constitutes just one life, then what could individuate two organisms?

For example, for any objects, the *x*'s, they have at most one sum at any given time. There is no instance wherein two sets of objects or particles could compose two organisms if they constitute one life.⁵¹⁰

Therefore, for van Inwagen what accounts for a subject's unity is that the activities of a life constitute a self-maintaining, well-individuated, and jealous event.⁵¹¹ There is no need for a deep phenomenological unity or

⁵⁰⁵ Van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, 83.

⁵⁰⁶ Blosser, "The Ensoulment of the Body in Early Christian Thought," 208.

⁵⁰⁷ Van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, 86–87.

⁵⁰⁸ Van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, 87–89.

⁵⁰⁹ Spaemann, *Persons*, 156.

⁵¹⁰ Van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, 39, 90–91.

⁵¹¹ Van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, 121.

any other form of unity. I take it that this final definition is compatible with an immaterial being like God. While his life isn't self-maintained because this would assume God is composed of a complex of properties of sorts, God's life is well individuated. We can tell what's in it and what isn't. I'm not part of God's life. God's life is also jealous. All the events occupants can only ever be the events occupants. Therefore, the event of God's life meets van Inwagen's demands. How does this work if there are multiple divine persons that have well-individuated lives? There is certainly an answer to this, but the details are complex and sophisticated and there is reason to believe that whatever Trinitarian metaphysics one is already committed to will apply here. Trinitarian problems are a separate issue from the issue of the Two Sons Worry. However one solves here should carry over.

I further take it that the contemporary terminology of "persons" can map onto what van Inwagen thinks of as the single acting subject of a life. Van Inwagen does not use this terminology but as a van Inwagen inspired account, I think there is good reason to connect the term with his idea. Personhood is fundamentally a mode of existence of a rational nature.⁵¹² Such a definition of personhood is well attested to within the Christian tradition. For example, Richard of St Victor says a person is "someone existing through himself alone according to a singular mode of rational existence."⁵¹³ Human natures are just principles in virtue of which their supposits subsist.⁵¹⁴ Where 'subsist' just means to exist in and through itself and not another.⁵¹⁵ This doesn't require us to be committed to a concrete view of human natures where persons are identical to human natures (though I think there is good reason to accept the concrete view).

Since van Inwagen defines lives as a self-maintaining, well-individuated, jealously unique event, I think the Two Sons Worry can be avoided because if the divine Son exists as having an enduring and eternal life then even if the Son adds something that would typically constitute a life if it were jealously well-individuated on its own in normal circumstances, he cannot have two lives simultaneously because no person can have two lives. Since he cannot have two lives he cannot be two persons. A person requires a life, so if there is only one life there is only one person. It is not just the assertion that the hypostatic union negates two persons because that is heresy. It is not purely ad hoc. There is a metaphysical reason that assuming a human nature doesn't generate a human person. In order for a second person to be generated a distinct and *separate* self-maintaining, well-individuated, jealous event is required. Persons can only have one set of *jealous* events and since the human nature of Christ is assumed by a *more* jealous life event, it does not admit of a second jealous life event to exist within itself. And for those that may find the idea that a divine person has an event curious, note that it is standard medieval doctrine to identify God with an event—pure actuality.

⁵¹² Spaemann, *Persons*, 31.

⁵¹³ Richard of St Victor, "On the Trinity," in *Trinity and Creation*, ed. Boyd Taylor Coolman and Dale M. Coulter, trans. Christopher P. Evans (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2011), 4.24.

⁵¹⁴ Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 25.

⁵¹⁵ Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 16.

Such an explanation coheres quite well with the definitions of the hypostatic *union* often offered in the Patristic literature. For example, Cyril says the union “signifies the concurrence in one reality of those things which are understood to be united.”⁵¹⁶ Van Inwagen’s concept of life sounds very much like this “concurrence in one reality.” Or as Christopher Beeley has summarized of the era, “the Word is united with human flesh as a single hypostasis or person, not two.”⁵¹⁷ Again, such summarizations have no clear incompatibility with van Inwagen’s concept of life. And substance dualism and person-part identity are nowhere required in such an account. Take again the traditional definition of person for theological literature as an incommunicable existence of an intellectual nature.⁵¹⁸ This definition fits naturally with van Inwagen’s concept of lives. Therefore, since van Inwagen’s account does not require substance dualism or person-part identity it appears the Two Sons Worry—at least this version—is not so worrisome.

6.6 Conclusion

Despite Mullins’s claim that no satisfactory answer has been provided to the Two Sons Worry I have argued otherwise. While I think the older accounts of personhood are sufficient in themselves to parry against his critiques, I have also advanced a new model of ontic unity that can better meet the desiderata Mullins desires. It provides a robustly metaphysical reason for why, in the incarnation, the human nature the divine Son assumes does not generate a second person. I readily admit this account may not be true. The hypostatic union may be grounded in an alternative metaphysic. My point has not been to advocate van Inwagen’s metaphysic as the truth but as a foil to Mullins’s argument. I have also shown that substance dualism is not the default position of Conciliar Christology and that one should reject it in order to preserve the more important claims of Conciliar Christology. Future attempts to avoid the charge of two sons should similarly avoid substance dualism.

⁵¹⁶ Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, 73.

⁵¹⁷ Beeley, *The Unity of Christ*, 260.

⁵¹⁸ Williams, “Unity of Action in a Latin Social Model of the Trinity,” 326.

7 – CONCLUSION

As my exploration ends, I've attempted to employ a type of Christological anthropology that assumes the truth of Conciliar Christology and examines various mind-body problems in light of it. In chapter 2 I explored the doctrine of the resurrection. I concluded that substance dualism, at best, offers no additional resources for securing the possibility of the resurrection of the numerically identical body. At worst, it lacks the resources necessary to maintain the resurrection of the numerically identical body. In chapter 3 I examined two arguments against substance dualism based on the incarnation event. I concluded that substance dualism can make sense of the first problem of embodiment but failed to make sense of why and how someone is human or becomes human. In chapter 4 I argued that if one is committed to a literal descent, which there is good reason to be so committed, then a traditional form of substance dualism, especially Cartesian substance dualism, must reject the literal descent. Finally, in chapter 5, I developed a recent argument against Conciliar Christology. I argued that the problem for Conciliar Christology generating two persons in the incarnation is only problematic if one is committed to substance dualism, but if someone rejects it, they are free from Nestorian conclusions. I offered a novel approach to providing so-called "ontic" unity to provide a metaphysical foundation for why there is only one person in the incarnation. Throughout each of these chapters I have attempted to develop alternative materialist models that provided solutions to each problem identified. I've done this in hopes to show that there is even better reason to reject substance dualism.

Therefore, I hope to have achieved two primary things. First, I hope it is sufficiently clear that substance dualism has significant challenges if it is to be a live option for the person committed to the veracity of Conciliar Christology. If my arguments have not been persuasive enough to show the incoherence of substance dualism it should at least cause serious worry and new attempts to defend it. Second, it should be clear that materialism has a surprising amount of resources within its own metaphysical toolkit to explain traditional Christological doctrines. In fact, where substance dualism falters, materialism can often offer a novel solution. I, of course, have not attempted to promote materialism as *the* metaphysic for Conciliar Christology or for anything else. Various neo-Aristotelian accounts are also legitimate options and have been referred to at various points (in fact, I find neo-Aristotelian solutions more plausible). But if materialism is a viable option for Conciliar Christology then most neo-Aristotelian views should also be consistent since the main worries for materialism are either not problems for neo-Aristotelian dualism or provide the same solution.

I have not ultimately scratched the surface of the research program I've employed, exploring how the commitments of Conciliar Christology can shed light on contemporary philosophy of mind debates. There remain a number of areas and questions that new research should pursue. In this respect, I hope this thesis is

an encouragement for future research on this topic. It would similarly be interesting how other Christological models might provide insight into the mind-body debates.

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