



THE FREE WILL OF A SINLESS INCARNATE GOD AND THE DISPOSITIONAL INCARNATION MODEL: A RESPONSE TO SWINBURNE

Joshua Sijuwade

London School of Theology, UK

Correspondence email address: joshua.sijuwade@lst.ac.uk

ABSTRACT: This article offers a critical response to Richard Swinburne's "The Free Will of a Sinless Incarnate God". Swinburne addresses an apparent contradiction in traditional Christology: how Christ can possess a human nature, including genuine free will, while being necessarily sinless. After reviewing Swinburne's proposed solution - that Christ was predetermined not to sin but still experienced genuine temptation - I develop an objection based on Kane's libertarian theory of free will. I argue that genuine human freedom necessarily involves Self-Forming Actions where alternative possibilities, including the possibility to sin, are genuinely available. Since Christ, on Swinburne's account, lacks this capacity, he cannot possess genuine human freedom and thus lacks an essential component of human nature. I propose the Dispositional Incarnation Model as the most robust solution to this dilemma, as it allows Christ to possess genuine libertarian freedom at the occurrent level of his human experience while securing his sinlessness through his divine nature dispositionally exemplified. This, rather than the solution proposed by Swinburne, provides the conceptual basis for one affirming the traditional Chalcedonian claim that Christ is "perfect in humanity" and "like us in all respects except for sin".

KEYWORDS: Incarnation; sinlessness; self-forming actions; metaphysics; ontology

Introduction

Richard Swinburne (2025) addresses a central problem in Christology: the apparent incompatibility between Christ having a human nature and Christ being sinless. According to the traditional definition by the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), Christ is "perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity" and "like us in all respects except for

sin". Swinburne takes this to mean that Christ has both a divine nature (being omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good) and a human nature (having a human body and soul with human capacities for thinking and acting). A key aspect of human nature, Swinburne argues, is possessing free will in a sense that makes humans morally responsible for their actions. Humans can choose either to do what is morally right or what is morally wrong, and they are praiseworthy or blameworthy accordingly. But this capacity seems incompatible with Christ's divine nature, which entails being essentially perfectly good and thus incapable of choosing moral wrong. Swinburne considers four possible solutions to this apparent contradiction:

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| (1) (Solutions) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Christ's sinlessness is merely contingent rather than necessary (ii) A compatibilist view of free will is true (iii) Christ's free will was merely a free will to choose whether to do supererogatory good actions (iv) Christ was necessarily sinless but still felt what normal humans feel when tempted |
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Swinburne rejects the first three solutions and defends the fourth. He dismisses the first solution because it would make our salvation contingent on Christ freely resisting temptation throughout his earthly life, placing our salvation at risk. He rejects compatibilism (the second solution) because he finds it "highly implausible" that someone could be morally responsible if they are deterministically caused to act by events they don't control. And he finds the third solution unsatisfactory because it would allow Christ to fail to achieve the primary purpose of the Incarnation.

Swinburne's preferred solution - the fourth - maintains that Christ necessarily could not sin but still experienced genuine temptation. He addresses several objections to this view:

First, to the objection that one cannot be tempted to do what one cannot do, Swinburne responds that there is a natural use of "tempt" where one can feel a strong desire to do wrong while having an even stronger determination not to yield. Like someone who has resolved to eat only vegan food during Lent might still feel tempted to eat non-vegan food, Christ could feel tempted to sin while being determined not to yield. Second, to the objection that Christ would not have had the kind of free will that all humans have, Swinburne argues that humans have different ranges within which they make "serious choices" about how to exercise their free will. Some may never be tempted to murder, for instance, while struggling with whether to steal. Christ could have a human free will, just with a different range of serious choices that excludes sin. Third, to the objection that this solution undermines objective theories of Atonement, Swinburne responds that Christ's atonement was still praiseworthy because God freely chose to become incarnate in a way that would involve suffering and death - a choice made before the incarnation but still freely made. Finally, Swinburne considers

whether his solution requires that Christ sometimes falsely believed he could yield to temptation. Most Christian tradition holds that Christ always knew he was God incarnate, which would mean he knew he could not sin. Swinburne suggests that perhaps Christ's knowledge of his own divinity was intermittent, allowing him to sometimes think he might yield to temptation and thus experience the full agonies of moral struggle that humans experience.

Swinburne concludes that his solution preserves both Christ's necessary sinlessness and his possession of a human free will, reconciling the two natures of Christ as defined by the Council of Chalcedon.

The Libertarian Conception of Free Will

Before developing my objection to Swinburne's position, I need to establish a robust conception of free will based on Robert Kane's (1996; 2024) theory of libertarian free will. According to this theory, free will involves more than just free action (acting voluntarily, intentionally, and rationally); it requires self-formation - "the process by which we shape our own characters, motives, and purposes, ultimately determining the kind of persons we become". Kane's libertarian view holds that free will is incompatible with determinism. If determinism were true, we would lack the "real alternative possibilities" necessary for free will and the "deeper sense of ultimate responsibility" for who we become. True freedom, on this view, requires two conditions:

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| (2) (Conditions) | (i) The Condition of Alternative Possibilities (AP): At some moments in life, agents must have more than one open option compatible with the same past and laws. |
| | (ii) The Condition of Ultimate Responsibility (UR): Agents should be at least partly responsible for anything that serves as a sufficient reason or cause for their present actions. |

To meet these conditions, Kane introduces the concept of Self-Forming Actions (SFAs) - acts by which we form our will, character, motives, and purposes. These SFAs must occur at some point in our lives if we are to be ultimately responsible for who we are. SFAs happen when we experience conflicting motivations - like moral duty versus self-interest - and make an effort to resolve this conflict. These are "will-setting" moments, as opposed to "will-settled" actions where our character already determines our choice. Most of our daily actions express an already formed character, but it is through SFAs that we actively shape who we are. This is crucial for moral responsibility. For example, even if Martin Luther's declaration "Here I stand, I can do no other" appears

determined by his character, his responsibility stems from the earlier SFAs through which he formed that character.

Kane addresses the objection that undetermined choices are random by distinguishing between “micro control” and “macro control”. While we might not control every neural firing in our brain, we maintain teleological guidance control over the deliberative process. When we succeed in making a choice for reasons we endorse, that success is not mere chance but an achievement of will.

Importantly, for Kane, responsibility is incremental. We are not required to be radically free in every action. As we develop, we encounter situations allowing for undetermined resolutions about what kind of person we will be. Through repeated SFAs, we gradually shape our character, becoming more responsible as adults because our current motives partly derive from earlier free choices. This framework explains why moral and legal responsibility often hinges on whether someone had a “fair opportunity” to do otherwise. If determinism were true, at no point could an agent have become a different sort of person, making blameworthiness questionable. The libertarian view captures why discovering that someone's criminal actions grew inevitably from an abusive childhood might mitigate blame without necessarily removing it completely.

The Objection to Swinburne's Fourth Solution

With this understanding of libertarian free will in place, I can now develop my objection to Swinburne's position. My central claim is that genuine human freedom necessarily requires the ability to perform SFAs with genuine alternative possibilities, including the possibility to sin. Since Christ, on Swinburne's account, lacks this capacity, he cannot possess genuine human freedom and thus lacks an essential component of human nature.

The Necessity of SFAs for Human Freedom

Swinburne's fourth solution maintains that Christ was necessarily sinless while still experiencing genuine temptation. He argues that Christ could have a human free will with a different range of “serious choices” that excludes sin. However, this solution fails to account for the fundamental role of SFAs in constituting human freedom. As Kane's theory demonstrates, free will is not merely about making voluntary choices within a predetermined range. It requires the capacity for self-formation - the ability to shape one's own character through choices that are not predetermined. These SFAs are essential to being “the ultimate creator and sustainer of one's own ends”.

The problem with Swinburne's solution is that it eliminates the possibility of genuine SFAs in Christ's moral life. If Christ is predetermined never to sin, then all his

moral choices are already settled. They may express his character, but they cannot form it in the sense required for libertarian freedom. In Kane's terminology, all of Christ's moral actions would be "will-settled" rather than "will-setting". Swinburne might respond that Christ could still perform SFAs in non-moral domains or in choosing between different good actions. However, this misunderstands the nature of SFAs as conceived by Kane. SFAs involve genuine conflicts between competing values or motivations where neither option is predetermined. The most profound and character-forming conflicts humans face often involve moral temptation - the struggle between what we know to be right and what we desire. These are precisely the conflicts that Christ, on Swinburne's account, cannot genuinely experience because the outcome is predetermined.

The Problem of Ultimate Responsibility

Kane's Condition of Ultimate Responsibility (UR) requires that agents be "at least partly responsible for anything that serves as a sufficient reason or cause for their present actions". This means that for Christ to have ultimate responsibility for his character and actions, he must have participated in forming that character through undetermined choices. Swinburne's solution fails to satisfy this condition. If Christ's sinlessness is necessary rather than contingent, then he cannot be ultimately responsible for his moral character. His divine nature predetermined that character, leaving no room for the kind of self-formation essential to human freedom.

Swinburne attempts to address this by suggesting that Christ freely chose to become incarnate in a way that would involve suffering and death. But this choice was made before the incarnation, not as part of Christ's human experience. It cannot substitute for the human experience of forming one's character through SFAs during one's lifetime. Furthermore, Kane's view emphasises that responsibility is incremental - built up through multiple SFAs over time. Even if we grant that Christ's pre-incarnation choice was free in the libertarian sense, a single choice cannot replace the ongoing process of character formation through SFAs that constitutes human freedom.

The Range of Serious Choices

Swinburne argues that humans have different ranges within which they make 'serious choices' about how to exercise their free will. Some may never be tempted to murder, while struggling with whether to steal. Christ could have a human free will, just with a different range of serious choices that excludes sin entirely. This response misunderstands the nature of libertarian freedom. The issue is not about the specific range of choices but about whether any genuinely undetermined moral choices are available. A person who would never murder might still face undetermined choices

about whether to lie or steal. But Christ, being necessarily sinless, faces no undetermined moral choices at all. His moral actions are all predetermined by his divine nature. Kane's concept of SFAs requires that at some points in our lives, we face choices where the outcome is not predetermined - where we could genuinely choose either option. For Christ to have human freedom in the libertarian sense, he would need to face some such choices in the moral domain. But Swinburne's solution explicitly denies this possibility.

Genuine Temptation and Epistemic Possibility

Swinburne suggests that Christ could experience genuine temptation despite being necessarily sinless if he sometimes did not know he was God. This would make it "epistemically possible" for him to sin, even if it was metaphysically impossible. However, this solution creates more problems than it solves. First, it requires attributing false beliefs to Christ, which many theologians would find problematic.¹ Second, even if Christ sometimes believed he could sin, this would not make it actually possible for him to sin. His choices would still be predetermined by his divine nature, regardless of his beliefs about them. More fundamentally, epistemic possibility cannot substitute for the metaphysical possibility required by libertarian freedom. Kane's theory requires that multiple pathways be genuinely available to the agent - not just believed to be available. For an SFA to occur, the agent must be able to choose either option, with nothing in the prior causal history determining which option will be chosen.

If Christ's moral choices are predetermined by his divine nature, then he lacks the genuine alternative possibilities necessary for SFAs, regardless of what he believes about his own freedom. His moral character is not self-formed through undetermined choices but predetermined by his divine nature. This fundamentally distinguishes his moral agency from human moral agency as understood in the libertarian tradition.

Implications for Christ's Human Nature

The Council of Chalcedon defined Christ as "perfect in humanity" and "like us in all respects except for sin". Swinburne interprets this to mean that Christ has a human nature, which includes having a human body and soul with human capacities for thinking and acting. He also argues that free will in a sense that makes humans morally responsible is an essential aspect of human nature. My objection demonstrates that Christ, on Swinburne's account, lacks a fundamental aspect of human nature: the

¹ Though I am not one of the individuals that finds this problematic, once the model of the Incarnation proposed in this article is taken into account.

capacity for libertarian free will involving SFAs in the moral domain. Since Christ cannot participate in the self-formation of his moral character through undetermined choices, he lacks an essential feature of human moral agency.

This creates a dilemma for Chalcedonian Christology:

- (3) (Dilemma)
 - (i) Either libertarian free will (including the capacity for moral SFAs) is essential to human nature, in which case Christ lacks a human nature.
 - (ii) Or libertarian free will is not essential to human nature, in which case the traditional understanding of human freedom and responsibility must be abandoned.

Neither option is attractive for traditional Christian theology. The first undermines the Chalcedonian definition of Christ as “perfect in humanity”. The second undermines the traditional Christian understanding of human freedom and responsibility, which forms the basis for concepts like sin, redemption, and salvation.

The Dispositional Incarnation Model and Contingent Sinlessness

Having shown the inadequacy of Swinburne's fourth solution, we might wonder whether there are other possible solutions to the problem of reconciling Christ's sinlessness with his human nature. One possible solution is that of revisiting a specific solution option put forward, but ultimately rejected by Swinburne - namely, that of the first option. However, before we can revisit this solution it will be important to unpack a different model of the Incarnation, other than the one put forward by Swinburne, which will help providing a new conceptual foundation for this option out of dilemma.

Unpacking the Dispositional Incarnation Model

In previous work,² I introduced a new model of the Incarnation, which I term The “Dispositional Incarnation Model” (hereafter, DIM).³ The DIM provides a sophisticated metaphysical framework that can revitalise Swinburne's first solution - that Christ's sinlessness was contingent rather than necessary. This approach would preserve genuine libertarian freedom for Christ while addressing Swinburne's concerns about putting salvation at risk. The DIM is built upon two foundational philosophical theses: Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism (hereafter, NCSD) and the

² For this see, (Sijuwade, 2023; 2024).

³ In my previous work, I did not refer to the model with this name; however, going forward this will be the new name for the model.

Four-Category Ontology. According to NCSD,⁴ a person is a simple, psychological substance - a conscious subject of experience distinct from yet intimately related to a physical body. Unlike Cartesian dualism, NCSD holds that persons can possess physical characteristics through their relation to their bodies while remaining distinct substances with different persistence conditions. We can illustrate the central elements of this schematic framework in Figure 1. as such (where Person stands for the human person, Body stands for their organised physical body, M stands for mental properties and P stands for physical properties):

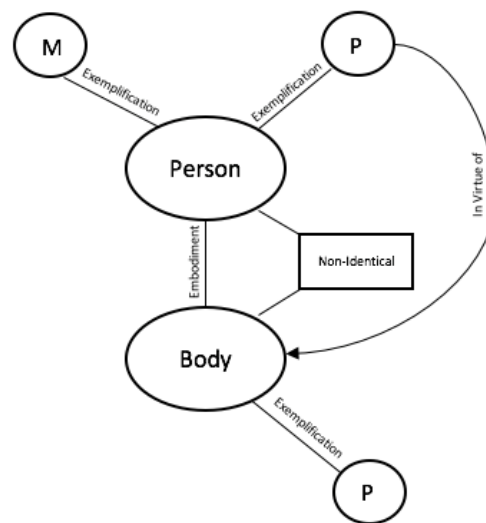


Figure 1. Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism

In essence, NCSD posits two unique substances: a person (with both physical and psychological properties) and a body (with solely physical properties). They're distinct due to differing persistence conditions, with the embodiment relation connecting them. The person, as a non-composite entity, grounds the unity of consciousness and isn't necessarily detachable from the body. However, a further important aspect of the person is that of their possession of a "robust first-person perspective".⁵ The philosophical concept of a robust first-person perspective refers to a person's capacity for self-reference and self-awareness - the ability to conceive of oneself as oneself and view the world from a first-person viewpoint. Thus, a self-concept, such as "I'm glad that I am a father", manifests an individual's robust first-person perspective-it attributes to oneself a first-person reference. A person, within the framework of NCSD, can thus be taken to be one that bears a robust first-person perspective - it has the ability to conceive of oneself as oneself, in the first-person - which is necessary and sufficient for the substance that bears it to be classed as a person. Turning our attention

⁴ For an unpacking of this psychological theory beyond that featured below, see (Lowe, 2018)

⁵ For more on the concept of a first person perspective, see (Baker, 2013).

to the Four-Category Ontology.⁶ The Four-Category Ontology posits four fundamental ontological categories:

- (4) (Categories)
 - (i) Objects (particular substances): Property-bearing particulars with determinate existence and identity conditions
 - (ii) Kinds (substantial universals): Universals that are kinds of being
 - (iii) Attributes (non-substantial universals): Universal ways of being that characterise kinds and have modes as instances
 - (iv) Modes (property-instances): Particularised properties that are instances of kinds and are the particular ways of being of a given object

These categories are related through three formal ontological relations: instantiation (between a particular entity and a universal), characterisation (between modes/attributes and their bearers), and exemplification (between an object and an attribute). We can illustrate this category through the diagram in Figure 2., termed the “Ontological Square”, which is as follows:

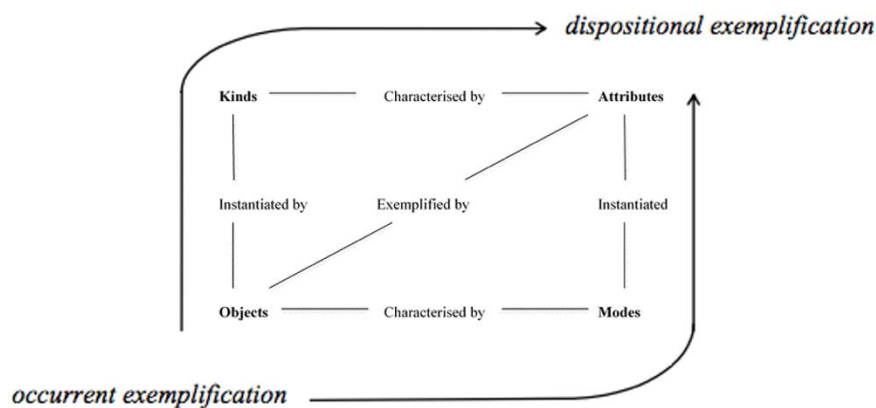


Figure 2. Ontological Square

As illustrated above, and most importantly for our purposes, the DIM (and the Four Category Ontology in general) distinguishes between two forms of exemplification:

- (5) (Exemplification)
 - (i) Dispositional exemplification: An object exemplifies an attribute by instantiating a kind which is characterised by that attribute

⁶ And for a further unpacking of this ontological framework beyond that featured below, see (Lowe, 2006)

- (ii) Occurrent exemplification: An object exemplifies an attribute by being characterised by a mode which instantiates that attribute

In providing a brief sketch of the DIM, this particular model posits that at the moment of the Incarnation, “the Son transformed into a human ‘person’ (i.e., a subject of experience) and became intimately related, through a relation of embodiment, to the organised physical body of Christ”. Post-Incarnation, the Son instantiates two kinds: Deity and Humanity. The Son exemplifies the divinity attributes dispositionally - through instantiating the kind Deity - while exemplifying the humanity-attributes both dispositionally and occurrently.⁷ The DIM also provides a robust conception of the will as a “spontaneous power” - an active, non-causal power whose manifestations are volitions or acts of will. According to this view, the will is neither caused by external factors nor does its exercise necessarily cause anything to happen. It is a “two-way power” (to will or refrain from willing) that is responsive to reason. In Christ's case, he possesses two distinct token wills: a divine will and a human will. The divine will is dispositionally exemplified (through Christ instantiating the kind Deity), while the human will is occurrently exemplified (through modes that directly characterise Christ). This metaphysical architecture provides the resources for a more nuanced approach to Christ's freedom and sinlessness than Swinburne's fourth solution.

Off of this brief sketch we can now further detail the central aspects of the model in more depth. A distinctive feature of the DIM is its transformative understanding of the Incarnation. Unlike traditional models where the Son merely assumes or adds a human nature to his divinity, the DIM posits that *the Son transformed into a human person through a genuine metaphysical change*.⁸ This transformation is not a diminishment of the Son's divinity but a reconfiguration of how his divine nature is exemplified - now dispositionally rather than occurrently. It is important to note that within this ontological system kinds *are* natures, and thus by Christ continuing to dispositionally exemplify the kind Deity *and* now also exemplifying the kind Humanity, post-Incarnation, he possesses two natures: divine and human, even though he only *occurrently exemplifies* the human attributes, and does *not* occurrently exemplify the divine attributes - which allows him to be rightly termed a human person (as he will

⁷ It is important to emphasise the fact that “dispositionality”, within the Four-Category Ontology, is not equivalent to potentiality, but rather is a shorthand for the state of affairs (expressed by a certain type of predication) of a particular object (i.e. individual substance) instantiating some kind which is characterised by certain attributes. Dispositionality in this case thus revolves around a *way* in which an individual substance can be related ontologically to an attribute, and this way (rather than the occurrent way) provides the identity conditions for that specific substance.

⁸ Individuals such as Jonathan Hill (2011) have classed Swinburne's (1994; 2008) account of the Incarnation as a “transformationalist” account similar to the one defended by myself in this article (i.e., the DIM). This is due to Swinburne's (2008, p. 49) assertion that the Son, in the incarnation, takes on a human body and becomes a human soul, interpreted in an “Aristotelian” (rather than a ‘Platonic’) sense, which is the assumption of certain abstract properties that enable him to take on a “human way of thinking and acting”. However, though Swinburne continues to affirm the Son's taking on of a human nature as that of him assuming a ‘human way of thinking and acting’ (and thus he is an “Aristotelian soul”), it is not clear here if this should be interpreted as a *literal* transformative act, and thus if Swinburne's account is indeed bedfellows with the DIM.

have human modes that directly characterise him (particular instantiations of the attributes *being limited in knowledge, power and spatial location* etc. that characterise him)). Christ is thus a human person (through his occurrent exemplification of the human attributes) who possesses two natures: divine and human (through his dispositional exemplification of the divine and human attributes (which is that of him instances of the kind Deity and the kind Humanity, which are, themselves, characterised by these attributes)).

Restating this all now from an even more focused perspective: at a *metaphysical level*, this transformation is grounded in NCSD, whereby the Son changes from being a divine immaterial substance (object) to becoming a material psychological substance (object) intimately related to a physical body through the relation of embodiment, while maintaining his identity as the same subject of experience. That is, *the Son transforms from a divine person to a human person*. Importantly, however, in this transformation, the Son is still the same person that he was prior to the Incarnation, by him continuing to possess the *same* robust first-person perspective in his incarnate state. Hence, there is only a change to the *type* of person that the Son is in his incarnate state - divine person to human person - instead of a change to which person there is in this state. We can illustrate in Figure 3. the schematic framework provided by the DIM as such (with SG standing for Son of God, M for mental properties, and P for physical attributes).

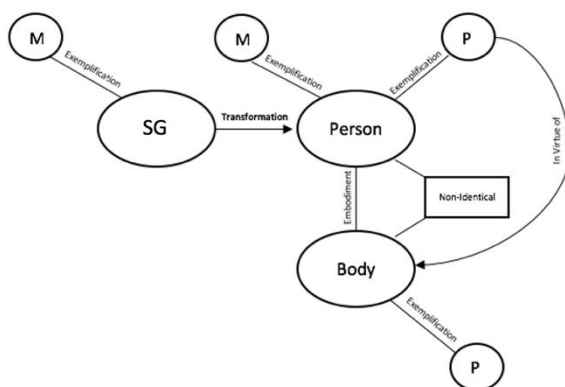


Figure 3. Non-Cartesian Transformation

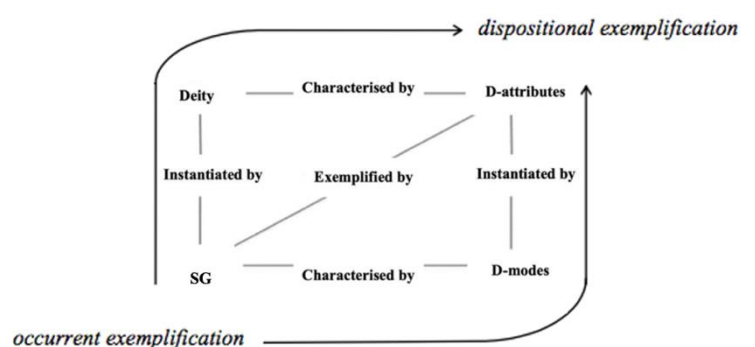


Figure 4. Ontological Square (Pre-Incarnation Exemplification)

Yet, despite the Son transforming from a divine person to a human person, the DIM still wants to maintain the fact of the Son *remaining divine in a certain sense*. However, a challenge remains: how can the Son lose divine attributes - such as immateriality -yet stay divine? To address this and related issues, we turn to the ontological framework of the Four Category Ontology.

That is, the metaphysical shift that takes place during the incarnation is accompanied, at the ontological level, by a fundamental change in *modes of exemplification*. More specifically, according to the present account, there are solely two states of affairs pre-Incarnation: a dispositional state of affairs, in which the Son is dispositionally exemplifying the divinity attributes, and an occurrent state of affairs,

in which the Son is occurrently exemplifying the divinity attributes. More precisely, the Son is exemplifying the divinity attributes dispositionally through instantiating the kind Deity, which is characterised by the divinity attributes, resulting in the Son - at that specific time - being a deity-instance. Moreover, the Son is also exemplifying the divinity attributes *occurrently* through him being characterised by divinity modes, which are instances of the divinity attributes, resulting in the Son - at that time - being characterised as a particular deity. Importantly, however, prior to the Incarnation, the Son is not instantiating the kind Humanity, and neither is he being characterised by humanity modes that are instances of the humanity attributes, and thus he is not (dispositionally or occurrently) human prior to the Incarnation - in short, the Son, at this specific time, is not a particular human, but is simply a particular deity.⁹ Thus, as noted previously, a “what-question” asked of the Son in his pre-incarnate state - such as “what is the Son?” - would have as the correct answer that the Son is a particular divine person. We can capture this state of affairs within the Ontological Square featured in Figure 4. above, where, in the pre-Incarnation case, we see that the Son exemplifies the divinity attributes in the dispositional and occurrent way, and thus is a particular divine person, and not a particular human person.

Now, at the moment of the Incarnation, we see a change take place (i.e. a transformation) in two ways: first, there is now a new dispositional state of affairs that obtains - where the Son, in addition to his dispositional exemplification of the divinity attributes, now dispositionally exemplifies the humanity attributes - and thus now becomes a divine-instance *and* human-instance. Second, there is also now a new occurrent state of affairs that obtains, where the Son is now *characterised* by some humanity modes that are instances of the humanity attributes, and thus is occurrently *human*. In other words, he is characterised as a *particular human* as the qualities of being human - in the “propertied” form of the humanity attributes - are now taken to be features of the Son. Importantly, however, there is now also an occurrent state of affairs that *fails to obtain* - namely, one in which the Son is characterised by some divinity modes. That is, the Son is now, post-Incarnation, not occurrently *divine* - in the sense that he is now not characterised as a particular *divine* person - as the qualities of being divine, in the “propertied” form of the divinity attributes, are now not features of the Son. As the humanity modes are *particular ways* in which the Son is, they are his characteristics, features and aspects. And as the Son is now not characterised by any divinity modes - and thus is not (occurrently) divine - he lacks the characteristics, features and aspects of a particular divine person, even though he remains dispositionally divine (i.e. as a deity-instance).

Now, at a *prima facie* level, this might appear to negate the Son of his divinity post-Incarnation - through his lack of an occurrent exemplification of the divinity attributes. However, what needs to be understood is that the dispositional exemplification of the divinity attributes is what renders the Son as the kind of entity that he is: a divine and human entity - through him being an instance of each of the kinds Deity and Humanity. Thus, even though the existence of the humanity modes provide the Son

⁹ This point is important in distancing the present model from a model such as William Lane Craig’s (2017) “Neo-Apollinarian” model that takes the Son to be an (archetypal) human prior to the Incarnation.

with his occurrent character as a particular human, he is not *merely* a particular human, as he also falls into the kind Deity (and the kind Humanity), which provides him with his existence and identity conditions. Thus, again, as noted previously, a “what-question” asked of the Son in his post-incarnate state - such as “what is the Son now?” - would have as the correct answer that he is a particular human person, who is divine (i.e. is an instance of the kind Deity).¹⁰

Hence, despite the Son appearing to merely be a particular human, *what he is* - that is, what his (kind) essence (or identity) is - is more than that: he is a particular human person who is also divine. Thus, in the post-Incarnation case, as expressed by the following Ontological Square in Figure 5., we have a split exemplification, where the Son instantiates the kind Deity, and thus dispositionally exemplifies the divinity attributes, which establishes a dispositional route for the Son to exemplify these attributes post-Incarnation:

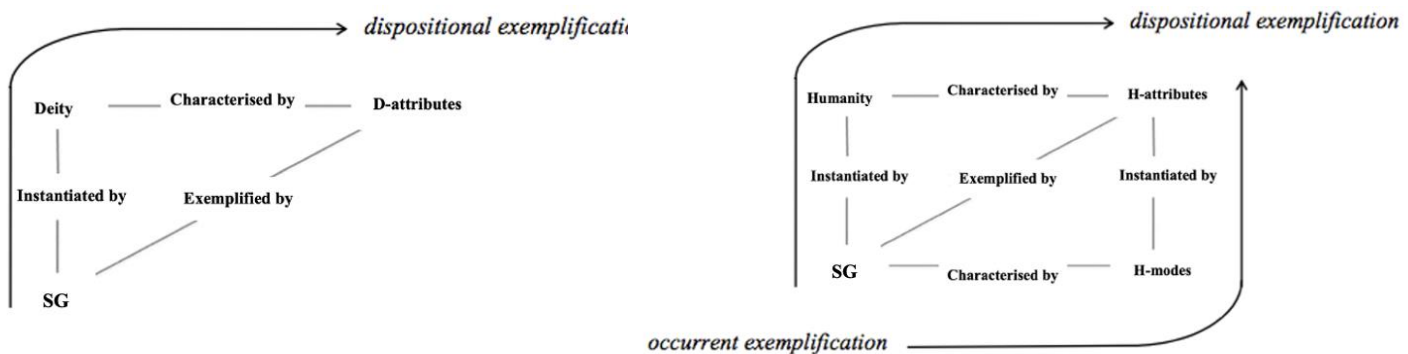


Figure 5. Ontological Square (Post-Incarnation Exemplification)

Consequently, the Son, post-Incarnation, is thus related differently to the divinity-attributes and humanity-attributes - which are the attributes essential for an object *being* divine or *being* human - through the Son *being* a deity-instance, that is instantiating Deity, and also now being a human-instance, that is instantiating Humanity, and by him being characterised by humanity-modes (which are particular ways of *being* human). The Son thus *changes* from being a particular object that is dispositionally and occurrently divine to now being a particular object that is, on the one hand, divine and human (i.e. is a deity and human-instance), yet, on the other hand, is solely occurrently a particular human. There is thus a change in *what* the Son (dispositionally) is: divine to divine and human, and a change of *how* the Son is (occurrently) characterised: divine to human.

Taking all of this into account, we can thus see that here is thus the postulation, in the DIM, of a transformation that takes place during the incarnation that can be viewed from two perspectives: a metaphysical perspective, through the NCSD, and an

¹⁰ With him also being an instance of the kind Humanity as well.

ontological perspective, through the Four-Category Ontology. This is that, the metaphysical theses of NCSD and the Four-Category Ontology, when applied to the Incarnation, offer a comprehensive framework for conceiving of the dual nature that is possessed by Christ. The transformative act of the Incarnation is able to be truly realised here as the Son is able to truly transform into a (concrete) human “person”, that is intimately connected to an organised physical body - and this is able to be underwritten by the possession of the (abstract) humanity attributes, which grounds the acquisition of a complete human nature. Moreover, irrespective of the transformation that takes place during the Incarnation, the Son's dual nature remains post-Incarnation, on the basis of the consistent exemplification of the divinity-attributes - which ensures the continued possession of the Son's divine nature.

Now, one could raise the objection against all of this concerning the DIM's use of the language of the Son “transforming into a human person” rather than “assuming a human nature”, which seems to introduce a second personal subject alongside the divine Logos, potentially undermining Christ's unity. However, the DIM resolves this challenge by further distinguishing between personal identity and the manifestation of personhood: the eternal Son remains the single underlying subject (the “who”) while experiencing a transformation in how this personhood is “occursively” manifested during earthly life (the “what”). By using philosophical concepts of token/type identity and “robust first-person perspective”, the DIM demonstrates how Christ fully instantiates the type “human person” while the token person remains the eternal Son, thus preserving Christ's unity while accounting for authentic human experience without multiplying personal subjects. Similarly, as noted above, the concept of a “robust first-person perspective” explains how the Son acquires a genuinely human form of self-reference and self-awareness - experiencing the world from a human viewpoint with all associated limitations - while remaining the same subject. That is, in the incarnation, the eternal Son acquires a human form of self-awareness with all its limitations, while remaining the *same subject*. This allows the DIM to maintain that Christ fully instantiates the type “human person” while the token person remains the eternal Son, preserving Christ's unity while accounting for authentic human experience without multiplying personal subjects. In all, the model conceptualises personhood not as an indivisible metaphysical reality but as an attribute that can be exemplified in different modes - divine and human - by the single subject of the Son.

In addition to all of this, the transformative conception yields another crucial advantage: Christ possesses a single, unified consciousness. Unlike Swinburne's model, which must posit either intermittent divine knowledge or two parallel streams of consciousness (divine and human), the DIM presents Christ with an *integrated consciousness* befitting a single subject of experience. Christ experiences reality primarily through his human consciousness (occurently exemplified), while his possession of the property of omniscience is had by him but, as noted above, is dispositionally exemplified (i.e., it is had by Christ *indirectly* simply in virtue of him

instantiating the kind Deity that is *itself* characterised by the attribute of omniscience, rather than it *directly* charactering him occurrently by him possessing an omniscience mode). This eliminates the need for problematic explanations of how Christ could sometimes be unaware of his own divine nature or identity, as Swinburne suggests - as, according to the DIM, Christ would not have been directly aware of his divine nature, *by an act of introspection*, but was reliant upon the Father (through the Holy Spirit) making him aware of this (such as that of him not only being of the kind Humanity (and thus being a human person) but also being of the kind Deity (and thus him possessing the divine nature) at a specific point of his life.¹¹

A further important aspect of the DIM here is its fundamental reorientation of traditional Christology. Under the DIM, Christ is conceptualised primarily as a *human person with a divine nature*, rather than the traditional formulation of a *divine person with a human nature*. This is evident in the DIM's claim that was previously stated that, at the moment of the Incarnation, "the Son transformed into a human 'person' (i.e., a subject of experience) and became intimately related, through a relation of embodiment, to the organised physical body of Christ". This reversal has profound implications for our understanding of Christ's freedom. By positioning Christ as fundamentally a human person who occurrently exemplifies human attributes (including a human will), the DIM places Christ's human experiences, decisions, and moral struggles at the centre of his identity. His divine nature remains fully present, but it is dispositionally exemplified rather than constituting his primary mode of being during the Incarnation (i.e., it is had by Christ *indirectly* simply in virtue of him instantiating the kind Deity that is itself characterised by the attributes of divinity (e.g. omnipotence, omniscience, omnibenevolence etc.), rather than it *directly* charactering him occurrently by him possessing modes of divinity). This framework elegantly resolves our central problem regarding libertarian freedom. As a human person, Christ naturally possesses the capacity for genuine SFAs with undetermined outcomes at the occurrent level. His human decisions are not predetermined by a divine nature that overrides his humanity; rather, they are genuine expressions of human freedom shaped by his unique metaphysical constitution. Christ's sinlessness becomes a profound moral achievement by a human person who, while supported by his dispositionally exemplified divine nature, faces genuine moral choices with real alternatives. Additionally, this understanding better accounts for biblical portrayals of Christ's human experiences - his growth in wisdom, his emotional responses, his temptations and struggles - as authentic rather than merely apparent. It provides a more satisfying account of how Christ can be "like us in all respects except for sin" while maintaining the integrity of both his divine and human natures. We will unpack what has been briefly said here now in more detail.

¹¹ I leave it open when in Christ's ministry this specifically would have been the case (such as during his baptism, temptation in the wilderness, Transfiguration, his passion etc.).

Revisiting Contingent Sinlessness Through the DIM Framework

Swinburne rejects the first solution - that Christ's sinlessness was contingent rather than necessary - primarily because it would make salvation dependent on Christ's resistance to temptation, seemingly placing our redemption at risk. However, DIM offers a more nuanced approach through its distinction between dispositional and occurrent exemplification.

How does this work? As the God-man, Christ instantiates both the kind Deity and the kind Humanity, which creates a unique metaphysical structure. Within the Four-Category Ontology, this instantiation of kinds determines who and what Christ essentially is - his fundamental identity, existence conditions, and metaphysical category. Through instantiating the kind Deity, Christ dispositionally exemplifies perfect goodness, which deeply shapes his character and fundamental desires. At the occurrent level of his human experience, Christ possesses genuine libertarian freedom with authentic alternative possibilities, including the theoretical possibility to sin. His human will functions as a spontaneous power capable of choosing either way when facing temptation. The crucial insight is that Christ's dispositional exemplification of divine attributes doesn't deterministically cause his choices but rather constitutes his essential nature and character. The kinds an entity instantiates establish its essential properties - what it truly is at the most fundamental level. This dispositionally exemplified divine nature provides Christ with a profound orientation toward goodness that influences - without necessitating - his free choices. Consider how St. Francis of Assisi, after his profound conversion, developed such a deep commitment to poverty and compassion that certain actions became virtually unthinkable to him - not because they were metaphysically impossible, but because they so fundamentally contradicted who he had become. We can be reasonably certain St. Francis would not have embezzled money from the poor, even while recognizing he remained free to do so in the libertarian sense. Similarly, Christ's dispositional exemplification of divine goodness means that while he genuinely could choose to sin at the occurrent level of his human experience, his character was so fundamentally oriented toward goodness that he would freely choose not to sin in every situation. This is not a limitation of freedom but its perfect expression - choices flowing from one's deepest nature rather than from external determination. When Christ faces temptation in the wilderness or struggles in Gethsemane, he experiences these as genuine moral conflicts with undetermined outcomes. His sinlessness is therefore contingent in a metaphysically robust sense - depending on genuinely free choices - while being secure because of who Christ essentially is. Unlike Swinburne's fourth solution, which claims Christ necessarily could not sin, the DIM maintains that Christ could sin at the occurrent level but would not sin because his essential nature disposed him to desire alignment with the good, without eliminating the genuine freedom of his choices. Importantly, this is not predetermination because Christ's actions are not causally determined by prior states or events beyond his control. In predetermination, the outcome is fixed regardless of the agent's choices. Under the DIM, Christ's divine nature dispositionally exemplified does not causally necessitate his choices but rather constitutes the character from which he freely chooses. The distinction lies in that Christ's sinlessness

emerges from his own free choices that align with his fundamental nature, not from external causal determination. His actions remain undetermined in the libertarian sense - there are genuine alternative possibilities available to his will at the moment of choice. Christ could truly choose otherwise, but freely chooses the good due to his profound orientation toward it. This maintains Kane's conditions for Self-Forming Actions, where the agent shapes their own character through undetermined choices, while providing a metaphysical basis for why Christ would consistently choose good over evil without being determined to do so.

How the DIM Addresses the Requirements of Libertarian Freedom

As just noted above, the advantage of this approach is that it preserves genuine libertarian freedom for Christ, including the capacity for SFAs. When Christ faces temptation, he experiences genuine conflicts between competing motivations - between his human desires and what he knows to be right. These conflicts are not predetermined in their outcome at the occurrent level of his human experience. Christ genuinely could choose either option, making these genuine SFAs in Kane's sense. The DIM thus satisfies Kane's Condition of Alternative Possibilities (AP). At some moments in his life, Christ has more than one open option compatible with the same past and laws. At the occurrent level of his human experience, Christ faces genuine undetermined choices, including the possibility to sin. This is not merely an epistemic possibility (believing he could sin when he metaphysically could not), but a genuine metaphysical possibility at the occurrent level. The DIM also satisfies Kane's Condition of Ultimate Responsibility (UR). Through his human will occurrently exemplified, Christ actively participates in forming his human character through undetermined choices. He is partly responsible for the reasons and motives that guide his actions. This is not a character imposed from outside or predetermined by his divine nature, but one that he actively shapes through his human choices. This gives Christ genuine ultimate responsibility for his sinlessness in a way that Swinburne's fourth solution cannot provide. Unlike Swinburne's fourth solution, which limits Christ's freedom to a predetermined range of options, the DIM allows Christ to face genuine moral dilemmas with undetermined outcomes. When Christ chooses not to sin, this is a genuine achievement of will - not a predetermined outcome but a free choice made in the face of genuine alternatives. This model maintains a crucial balance: Christ's divine nature dispositionally exemplified provides the ontological foundation for who he essentially is without causally determining what he chooses. His choices remain free in the libertarian sense - genuinely undetermined until the moment of choice - while being informed by his fundamental character. This preserves both the contingency required for authentic freedom and the reliability sought in salvation. Where Swinburne's model sacrifices libertarian freedom to secure sinlessness, the DIM shows how Christ's sinlessness can be a genuine moral achievement through libertarian free choices aligned with, but not determined by, his dispositionally exemplified divine nature.

Addressing Swinburne's Concerns About Contingent Sinlessness

As has been alluded to already, but now can be more clearly stated, the most significant objection to the contingent sinlessness view, according to Swinburne, is that it puts our salvation at risk. If Christ could genuinely sin, then he might have sinned, and our salvation would be lost. The DIM framework addresses this concern through the hierarchical relationship between dispositional and occurrent exemplification. At the dispositional level, Christ exemplifies divine attributes, including perfect goodness, wisdom, and power, through his instantiation of the kind Deity, which fundamentally determines who and what he essentially is. These dispositionally exemplified attributes provide Christ with a profound orientation toward goodness that influences - without necessitating - his free choices at the occurrent level. This is not a causal determination imposed from outside, but an internal relationship between Christ's dispositionally exemplified divine nature and his occurrently exemplified human nature. The distinction between dispositional and occurrent exemplification allows us to affirm both:

- (6) (Affirmation)
 - (i) That Christ genuinely could sin at the occurrent level of his human experience (preserving libertarian freedom)
 - (ii) That Christ would not sin because of who he is at the dispositional level (securing salvation)

This approach avoids turning salvation into a cosmic gamble while preserving genuine libertarian freedom for Christ. It recognises that Christ's sinlessness is a genuine achievement - the result of free choices made in the face of genuine alternatives - while also affirming that this achievement was secured by Christ's divine nature dispositionally exemplified. This is not a "rigged game" where Christ only appears to have freedom while the outcome is predetermined. Rather, it recognises that genuine freedom is compatible with character-based assurance. Just as we might be confident that a person of exceptional virtue would not commit a terrible crime (given *who*, and or *what*, they are), even while recognising their freedom to do so, we can be confident that Christ would not sin while recognising his freedom to do so.

The Experience of Temptation and Genuine Moral Struggle

This approach also provides a more satisfying account of Christ's experience of temptation than Swinburne's solution. On Swinburne's view, Christ experiences temptation despite necessarily being unable to sin, which requires either attributing false beliefs to Christ or limiting his self-knowledge. The DIM framework, by contrast, allows for Christ to experience temptation as a genuine moral struggle with undetermined outcomes at the occurrent level. When Christ faces temptation in the wilderness or struggles in Gethsemane, he experiences these conflicts through his occurrently exemplified human will, which involves genuine volitional struggle.

Christ's prayer in Gethsemane - "not my will but yours be done" (Luke 22:42) - reflects this genuine moral struggle. His human will, occurrently exemplified, genuinely desires to avoid suffering. This is not merely an illusion or a performance but a genuine human response to the prospect of suffering. Yet through the resources provided by his dispositionally exemplified divine nature, Christ freely chooses to align his human will with the divine purpose. This experience of temptation and moral struggle is essential to what the author of Hebrews means when he writes that Christ "has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet he did not sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Christ's sinlessness is not the absence of temptation or the impossibility of sin, but the genuine achievement of resisting temptation through free choices made in the face of genuine alternatives.

Moreover, this approach aligns more closely with the Chalcedonian definition of Christ as "perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity" and "like us in all respects except for sin". Christ is "perfect in divinity" through his instantiation of the kind Deity and his dispositional exemplification of all divine attributes. He is "perfect in humanity" through his instantiation of the kind Humanity and his occurrent exemplification of human attributes, including a genuine human will with libertarian freedom. Most crucially, he is "like us in all respects except for sin" because his human will functions according to the same principles as ours - it involves genuine libertarian freedom, including the capacity for moral SFAs. The difference is not that Christ lacks the capacity to sin that we possess, but that he successfully exercises his freedom in ways that we often fail to do. This approach preserves both the unity of Christ's person (there is only one subject who instantiates both kinds) and the distinctness of his natures (the divine and human attributes remain distinct and are exemplified in different ways). It thus offers a more satisfying solution to the problem of reconciling Christ's sinlessness with his possession of a human nature that includes genuine freedom.

The DIM and Scriptural Interpretation

A further significant advantage of the DIM framework is its capacity to enable genuinely literal readings of scriptural passages describing Christ's human characteristics, particularly those that have traditionally posed interpretive challenges for Christology. This stands in marked contrast to Swinburne's model, which necessitates more complex, non-literal interpretations of key biblical texts. Now, perhaps the most challenging passage for traditional Christology is Mark 13:32, where Jesus states: "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father". This text presents a straightforward claim that the Son lacks knowledge possessed by the Father, creating an apparent contradiction with the doctrine that Christ, as the Second Person of the Trinity, is omniscient. Swinburne's solution, with its reliance on a divided consciousness model, struggles to accommodate a literal reading of this passage. If Christ possesses both a divine stream of consciousness (which would necessarily know the day and hour) and a human stream of consciousness (which would lack this knowledge), then it cannot be literally

true that “the Son” does not know the day or hour. Rather, only one aspect or consciousness of the Son lacks this knowledge, while another aspect possesses it. This necessitates a non-literal interpretation of Jesus's statement, requiring us to understand “nor the Son” as meaning “nor the Son in his human consciousness” or “nor the Son’s human awareness” - qualifications that are conspicuously absent from the biblical text itself. This interpretive strategy ultimately requires a form of semantic reinterpretation, similar to what we see in other approaches that suggest the Greek term *οἶδεν* (traditionally translated as “know”) should be rendered as “aware” in this context. Such reinterpretations appear motivated more by theological convenience than sound exegetical principles, especially considering that *οἶδεν* appears over 318 times in the New Testament and is consistently translated as “know” in interlinear translations.

In contrast, the DIM provides the metaphysical framework necessary for a straightforwardly literal reading of Mark 13:32-36. According to the DIM, when the Son becomes incarnate, he continues to instantiate the kind Deity (thus retaining omniscience dispositionally) while ceasing to exemplify omniscience occurrently in his human experience. This means that Christ, during his incarnate life, genuinely did not know the day or hour of his return, as he had ceased to occurrently exemplify omniscience. This is not a matter of one “part” of Christ knowing while another does not, as in divided consciousness models. Rather, the DIM posits a single subject - Christ (i.e., the incarnate Son) - who genuinely experiences human cognitive limitations due to the transformation that occurs in the Incarnation.¹² The Son transforms from a divine person to a human person, continuing to possess the divine nature dispositionally while experiencing the world through genuinely human cognitive and experiential capacities. This allows us to take Jesus's statement in Mark 13:32 at face value without compromising his divine nature. When Jesus says that the Son does not know the day or hour, this is literally true of the incarnate Christ. Unlike Swinburne's model, which must interpret this as referring only to one aspect of Christ's divided consciousness, the DIM allows the statement to apply to Christ as a unified subject. The DIM thus preserves both the literal meaning of the text and the theological truth that Christ remains divine through his dispositional exemplification of divine attributes.

This capacity for a literal interpretation carries substantial theological and practical importance. First, it maintains hermeneutical integrity by applying consistent interpretive principles across Scripture rather than employing special pleading when encountering texts that create theological tension. When Jesus states that he does not know something, accepting this statement at face value honours the intent of the biblical authors to communicate Christ’s authentic humanity. Second, a literal reading preserves the soteriological significance of Christ's full identification with humanity. The letter to the Hebrews emphasises that Christ's ability to sympathise with our weaknesses depends on his genuine experience of human limitations and temptations (Hebrews 4:15). If these experiences are reinterpreted as merely apparent limitations or as divine attributes operating behind a human facade, the profound pastoral comfort of Christ's solidarity with human suffering is diminished. Third, literal

¹² I will primarily refer to the subject of the Incarnation now as the Son rather than as Christ, as was previously done.

readings maintain theological accessibility, allowing ordinary believers to grasp central truths about Christ without requiring specialised philosophical distinctions. When Scripture says Christ did not know something, a reading that allows this statement to mean what it appears to mean makes the biblical witness more accessible than readings requiring sophisticated semantic or psychological reinterpretations. Finally, a literal reading honours the historical emphasis of pro-Nicene and Chalcedonian theology on the completeness of Christ's humanity. The early church fathers insisted against docetic tendencies that Christ assumed all aspects of human nature, including its genuine limitations. As Gregory of Nazianzus famously wrote, "What is not assumed is not healed" - a principle that requires Christ's full participation in human cognitive and experiential limitations.

Now, a significant challenge that potentially could be raised with the above strategy, and the DIM on the whole, is that Christ's human limitations *entail* that he cannot be divine. An informal presentation of this argument typically could take the form: If omniscience is essential to divinity, and Christ lacks omniscience (e.g., he does not know the hour of his return), then Christ cannot be divine. However, the DIM actually breaks this entailment through its distinction between dispositional and occurrent exemplification of attributes. According to the DIM, Christ can genuinely lack knowledge of certain facts in his single (human) consciousness (thus not occurrently exemplifying omniscience) while still retaining omniscience dispositionally through his instantiation of the kind Deity. This means Christ can be authentically limited in his human experience while remaining fully divine in nature. This solution differs substantially from Swinburne's divided consciousness approach, which maintains that Christ simultaneously exemplifies both omniscience (in his divine consciousness) and limited knowledge (in his human consciousness). The DIM avoids the problematic implication that Christ is simultaneously both knowing and not knowing the same thing by affirming a single consciousness and distinguishing between dispositional possession and occurrent exemplification of attributes, rather than dividing Christ's consciousness into separate streams.

Thus, the DIM's metaphysical framework - particularly its distinction between dispositional and occurrent exemplification - provides the conceptual resources to interpret passages like Mark 13:32-36 literally without compromising Christ's divine nature. This represents a significant advantage over Swinburne's model, which requires a more strained, non-literal reading of the text due to its assumption of a divided consciousness. By allowing for a unified subject who genuinely experiences human limitations while remaining divine in nature, the DIM offers, on top of the other advantages detailed above, a more exegetically sound and theologically cogent approach to scriptural interpretation.

The Dispositional Incarnation Model and Some Further Challenges

The DIM and the Challenge of Monophysitism

A significant theological objection that could be raised against the DIM concerns its potentially problematic relationship to Monophysitism. This ancient Christological position, condemned at the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), maintained that Christ possessed only one nature (*physis*) that was a fusion or mixture of divinity and humanity, rather than two distinct natures. The objection might be formulated as follows: By describing the Son as “transforming into a human person” and emphasising the unity of Christ’s consciousness, the DIM appears to collapse or fuse Christ’s two natures, thus inadvertently endorsing a form of Monophysitism that contradicts orthodox Chalcedonian Christology.

This objection warrants serious consideration, as terminology evoking “transformation” might suggest the conversion of one nature into another or the fusion of two natures into a hybrid. However, the DIM does not commit one to Monophysitism for several reasons. First, the DIM explicitly maintains the ontological distinctness of Christ’s divine and human natures. Within the Four-Category Ontology framework, “Deity” and “Humanity” remain distinct substantial universals (kinds) that Christ instantiates simultaneously. There is no fusion or mixture of these kinds at the ontological level - they remain metaphysically distinct categories. Christ instantiates both kinds fully, not a hybrid kind resulting from their mixture. Second, the dispositional/occurrent distinction provides the crucial conceptual architecture for maintaining the integrity of both natures while accounting for their unified expression in Christ’s person. The divine attributes are not transformed into human attributes, nor are human attributes elevated into divine attributes. Rather, each set of attributes maintains its distinct character while being exemplified differently - divine attributes dispositionally and human attributes occurrently. This distinction preserves precisely what Chalcedon sought to protect: the completeness and distinctness of both natures “without confusion, without change, without division, without separation”. Third, unlike Monophysitism, which tended to emphasize Christ’s divinity at the expense of his humanity (leading to Christ’s humanity being absorbed into or overshadowed by his divinity), the DIM fully accounts for Christ’s complete humanity. In fact, the DIM grants a robust role to Christ’s human consciousness and experiences, recognizing them as genuine rather than merely apparent, which aligns with Chalcedon’s emphasis on Christ being “truly man”. Fourth, the model’s language of “transformation” refers not to a transformation of natures (as in Monophysitism, where divine and human natures would transform into a *tertium quid* - a third, hybrid nature), but rather to a transformation in how the eternal Son exemplifies his attributes. The Son’s divine nature remains intact (dispositionally exemplified) while he takes on a fully human nature (both dispositionally and occurrently exemplified). This is transformation in the mode of being, not in the content of the natures themselves. Finally, the DIM actually strengthens the conceptual resources for defending dyophysite Christology (the two-nature view affirmed at Chalcedon) by providing a coherent metaphysical framework for understanding how one subject can

possess two distinct natures without those natures being confused or mingled. By distinguishing kinds (which are natures) from their exemplification (whether dispositional or occurrent), the DIM maintains the ontological foundation for affirming with Chalcedon that Christ is “acknowledged in two natures... the property of each nature being preserved”.

Thus, rather than committing one to Monophysitism, the DIM offers a sophisticated metaphysical framework that preserves the very distinctions that Chalcedonian orthodoxy sought to maintain while addressing the philosophical challenges that have historically plagued two-nature Christology. The model’s nuanced account of Christ’s ontological structure allows us to affirm both the complete integrity of his divine and human natures and the unity of his person without falling into the Monophysite error of confusing or fusing those natures.

The DIM and the Challenge of Monothelitism

Another significant theological objection that could be raised against the DIM concerns its relationship to Monothelitism. This 7th-century Christological position - condemned at the Third Council of Constantinople (680-681 CE) - maintained that while Christ possessed two natures, he had only one will. As with our previous Monophysitism objection, this objection might be formulated as follows: By emphasizing the unity of Christ’s consciousness and the hierarchical relationship between his dispositionally exemplified divine nature and his occurrently exemplified human nature, the DIM appears to subordinate Christ’s human will to his divine will in a way that effectively collapses them into a single operative will, thus inadvertently endorsing a form of Monothelitism contrary to orthodox dyothelite Christology. This concern requires careful consideration, as any Christological model must maintain the integrity of Christ’s two wills to remain orthodox. However, the DIM not only avoids Monothelitism but can be extended through Lowe’s power-based conception of the will to provide a robust philosophical foundation for dyothelite Christology. The DIM can be strengthened by incorporating Lowe’s (2008; 2013) sophisticated account of the will as a “spontaneous power”. According to Lowe, the will is properly understood as an “active, non-causal power whose manifestations are volitions or acts of will”. This conception provides crucial metaphysical clarity for understanding how Christ can possess two distinct wills without contradiction or competition between them. Within this framework, powers are attributes exemplified by particular objects, and they can be distinguished as either “token powers” or “power types”. A token power is a particular power of a particular object that belongs essentially to that substance and cannot be transferred to any other particular object. Christ’s divine will and human will are thus distinct token powers, each individuated by three factors: their manifestation types (the range of actions they can will), their bearer (Christ himself), and their time of existence. Most significantly, Lowe’s account identifies the will as a “spontaneous power” - an active, non-causal power whose exercise is never caused by external factors and which does not necessarily cause anything to happen. The will is a “two-way power” to choose to act or refrain from acting, and it is a “rational power”

exercised in light of reasons. This understanding of will as a spontaneous power aligns perfectly with the theological understanding that Christ's human choices were genuine expressions of freedom rather than predetermined outcomes. Applied to the DIM, this framework establishes that Christ possesses two ontologically distinct wills - a divine will and a human will - as separate token powers. These are not merely different modes or aspects of the same power, but genuinely distinct powers with different manifestation types. The divine will, as part of the divine attributes, is dispositionally exemplified by Christ through his instantiation of the kind Deity. The human will, as part of the human attributes, is occurrently exemplified by Christ through modes that directly characterize him.

This distinction addresses the core concern of dyothelite Christology: that Christ's human will must be intact and operative for his humanity to be complete. Under the DIM, Christ's human will functions as a genuine spontaneous power - capable of rational deliberation and choice - without being overridden by his divine will. When Christ prays in Gethsemane, "not my will but yours be done" (Luke 22:42), we see the authentic operation of his human will as a spontaneous power that freely aligns with the divine purpose, not through compulsion but through the perfect virtue of his human nature. The DIM further aligns with Maximus the Confessor's crucial distinction between the natural human faculty of willing (*thelēma physikon*) and the gnostic will (*thelēma gnomikon*) characterized by deliberation and hesitation. Christ possesses a complete natural human will - a spontaneous power capable of genuine choice - but this will functions with perfect virtue rather than with the internal conflict characteristic of fallen human willing. Thus, the absence of volitional struggle in Christ does not indicate the absence of a human will, but rather the perfect functioning of that will uncorrupted by sin. This power-based conception also explains how Christ's two wills can operate harmoniously without compromising their distinctness. Each will functions according to its nature - the human will willing human actions and the divine will willing divine actions - with each operation proper to its nature.

The operations remain distinct even as they function in perfect concert, just as Constantinople III affirmed that Christ's human will "follows and does not resist or oppose but rather is subject to his divine and omnipotent will". Furthermore, the hierarchical ordering of dispositional and occurrent exemplification in the DIM provides a metaphysical basis for understanding how Christ's human will can maintain its integrity while being perfectly aligned with the divine purpose. His human will, as an occurrently exemplified spontaneous power, operates according to the proper functioning of human willing - responsive to reasons and capable of genuine choice - while receiving direction from the divine wisdom that he dispositionally exemplifies. This is not a case of one will absorbing or displacing the other, but of two distinct wills operating harmoniously according to their natures. Far from endorsing Monothelitism, the DIM extended with Lowe's power-based conception of the will provides a robust philosophical foundation for the dyothelite position affirmed at Constantinople III. It maintains both the metaphysical distinctness of Christ's divine and human wills as separate token powers and the perfect harmony of their operations under the direction of his one divine person. This approach avoids both the Monothelite error (which would compromise Christ's full humanity by

denying him a functional human will) and the Nestorian error (which would divide Christ into two separate agents). In sum, rather than collapsing Christ's two wills into one, the DIM's integration of Lowe's power-based conception of the will provides the conceptual resources to maintain their distinctness while explaining their harmonious operation. This offers a sophisticated metaphysical grounding for the orthodox dyothelite position, expressed at Constantinople III, that Christ possessed "two natural wills or willings... not contrary to one another... but his human will following, not resisting or opposing, but rather subject to his divine and omnipotent will". The DIM is indeed an orthodox (dyophysite and dyothelite) Christology.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Swinburne's attempt to reconcile Christ's necessary sinlessness with his possession of a human nature faces a serious objection from the libertarian conception of free will. As I have argued, genuine human freedom requires the capacity for Self-Forming Actions (SFAs) - undetermined choices through which we shape our own character. Since Christ, on Swinburne's account, is predetermined never to sin, he lacks the capacity for moral SFAs and thus lacks an essential component of human moral agency. The Dispositional Incarnation Model (DIM) offers a way to revitalise Swinburne's first solution - that Christ's sinlessness was contingent rather than necessary - while addressing his concerns about putting salvation at risk. By distinguishing between dispositional and occurrent exemplification, the DIM allows Christ to possess genuine libertarian freedom at the occurrent level of his human experience while maintaining the security of salvation through his divine nature dispositionally exemplified. This approach recognises that Christ's sinlessness was a genuine achievement - the result of free choices made in the face of genuine alternatives - rather than a metaphysical necessity that precluded the possibility of sin. It preserves both the integrity of Christ's human freedom and the security of the salvation he accomplished, offering a more satisfying solution than any of Swinburne's four options. In the end, the paradox of the Incarnation - that Christ is both fully divine and fully human - may never be fully resolved through philosophical analysis. But the DIM framework provides resources for understanding how Christ's divine and human natures could relate in a way that preserves both his sinlessness and his genuine human freedom, offering a path beyond the dilemma that Swinburne's account creates.

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