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Homo Factus Est as the Revelation of God

David P. Scaer

“Iam extra Iesum quaerere deum est diabolus, ibi desperatio sequitur, si accedat angustia conscientiae, praesumptio, si accedat vana religio” (WA 40 III:337). [Now, to seek God apart from Jesus is a thing of the devil. If anxieties of conscience come, despair will follow; if empty religion comes, it will lead to pride.]

Because the churches shaped by the Reformation accepted the historic creeds, the doctrine of God (theology, classical theism) was given short shrift during seminary days (1955-60).¹ Some churches had their fair share of liberal preachers, but on paper all were Trinitarian. Since then we cannot assume a common understanding of God. Process theology and feminism offer gods unknown a half-century ago. Perhaps we should not have assumed that even traditional churches had the same doctrine of God. Real differences in matters such as the sacraments were only symptomatic of basic, differing teachings on God (theologies).

Fully aware that theological axioms cannot by themselves explain a particular theology's total content, our proposal is that Christology is the foundational principle of theology. Lutheran theology is not determined only by its success in garnering adequate biblical support, but, more important, by showing that its center is Christ Himself. Whether we are discussing sanctification, church, or sacraments, we are, in effect, doing Christology. Doctrine that is not thoroughly christological is inherently deficient. But we want to take the christological axiom one step further. Jesus, especially in the humiliation of His cross, is not only the center, but is the entire content of “theology,” including that of God. Hence the title, “*Homo Factus Est* as the Revelation of God.”

¹Today the Reformed are more likely to call this category “theism,” which means “the concept of God.” See, for example, David Wells, “Classical Theism and the State of the Evangelical Movement,” *Modern Reformation* 9 (July/August 2000): 10-12.

Dr. David P. Scaer is chairman of the Department of Systematic Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and editor of Concordia Theological Quarterly.

1. Abstract Theological Phrases

Abstract phrases can lead to misinterpretations. The Epistle of James suffered at Luther's hands because he concluded that the Lord's brother had offered a plan of salvation by works that was at odds with Paul's (by faith alone without works). In the sixteenth century, Lutherans debated whether good works were detrimental or beneficial to salvation.² What will you have, antinomianism or Pelagianism? Past and often futile debates are no excuse for not discussing the role of good works in salvation. False axioms and true axioms falsely defined result in false theologies; nevertheless, newly coined phrases often provide for clearer definitions. A christologically defined theology offers the opportunity to refine definitions.

2. Grammatical Analysis

In grammatically deciphering an intransitive sentence, the predicate nominative describes the subject. Thus in the sentence, "The dog is brown," "brown" tells us something about "dog," and distinguishes it from dogs of other colors. So in the sentence, "Theology is Christology (or christological)," knowledge about God (theology) is the subject, and Christology (or christological) is the predicate nominative. The "given" distinguishes one particular theology from others. In the sentence, "theology" has two meanings: "the doctrine or concepts about God (theology)" and "the detailed study of a church faith (confession)." "Christological" applies to both God and the detailed study of a church's faith. Christology deals with Jesus' person, work, and teachings. Reversing the sentence, so that it reads, "Christology is theology," alters the meaning: what we know about God informs us about what we know about Jesus. Problematic is how and what we know about God. Answers have been taken from philosophy, science, raw biblical data, and one's own experience. By beginning the task of theology with God, we appear to be giving Him the glory, though we are, in fact, beginning with ourselves.

²Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, IV, 1. The opposing phrases were "Good works are necessary for salvation," and "It is impossible to be saved without good works."

3. All Theology Is Axiomatic (or Should Be)

Apart from how axioms (basic principles) are acquired, they provide theologies with their unity and explain differences among Christians. The Augsburg Confession is not a collection of detached doctrinal statements, but a treatise revolving around justification. For Arminianism (historic Methodism, Wesleyanism, Holiness bodies) sanctification is axiomatic, and accordingly, Christology and justification are subordinated. Anthropology with an attendant synergism replaces theology in importance, and doctrinal differences are tolerable. By beginning with theology, the Reformed allow philosophy a role in defining God. This *modus* permeates their method(s). For historic Fundamentalism and Neo-Evangelicalism *sola scriptura* is axiomatic, but rarely does this principle produce a unified theology because it does not distinguish between the authority of the Old and New Testaments, and it gives equal weight to each biblical citation. Thus they have no reason to stand for the reading of the gospel—even if they have one. With this approach the Bible becomes a book of how to please God (law).³ Contemporary theologies have their own axioms. An environmentalist theology posits that human beings are no more significant than animals, and the cardinal sin is “species-ism.” Feminism wants parity for its mother-god and rejects the exclusive Father-Son definition of the Trinity.⁴ Proponents of women’s ordination may be unaware that the fruit of a feministic axiom sees God as mother, a view that the prophets judged to be pagan. Arguments against women’s ordination that are content with the biblical prohibitions may have unwittingly fallen into a kind of legalism, because they do not recognize the theological structure on which the prohibitions are based.

³Paul R. Hinlicky (“The Lutheran Dilemma,” *Pro Ecclesia* 8 [Fall 1999]: 391-422) makes a pitch for the restoration of the historic episcopate as a unifying principle for theology and church. This follows from the recent ELCA alliance with the Episcopal Church. Lutherans are required to accept the episcopate, but Episcopalians do not have to give justification the same place of importance in their theology that Lutherans do. A sub-heading in his essay, “Sola Scriptura Self-Destructs” (394-396), provides a dismissal historical overview of the failure of systems that operate only from the Scriptures without paying attention to how they were understood in the church. He argues that the historical-critical method is one result.

⁴Attention must be drawn to a book like Rebecca B. Prichard’s *Sensing the Spirit: The Holy Spirit in Feminist Perspective* (Saint Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 1999). Keys to understanding the third person of the Trinity are the five senses, said to be more keenly developed in the gentler sex.

Identifying axioms is a theological task and it may prove disastrous not to recognizing them.

4. Divine Attributes as Theological Axioms

Axioms for theological systems are often selected divine attributes to which the other attributes are subordinated. Different controlling axioms produce conflicting religions and often different deities, as in the case of feminism.⁵ Marcion took his definition of God from the New Testament and concluded that another deity was active in the Old Testament, a still-popular conclusion for biblical scholars. The Reformed defer to divine sovereignty as the premier axiom, and thus their idea of covenant colors their systems.⁶ In any theological system infinity can be so defined as to make incarnation impossible—or at least difficult to explain. The Reformed solve the problem by predicating divine attributes to Christ's person, but not to His human nature as Lutherans do with the three genera.⁷ This has also been problematic for Lutherans. Divine attributes are assigned differently to the human nature.⁸ Such a *sic et non* approach is eating your cake and still having your incarnation.

⁵Michael Horton refers to some later Puritans for whom "'God' had become someone other than the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Trinity was not as prominent as a single, unitary being of blinding glory and power." "Is the New News Good News?" *Modern Reformation* 8 (September/October 1999): 12.

⁶So Horton, "Is the New News. . .": This is an important warning for some who seem to regard God's sovereignty as the center of the Christian message" (18). For a recent discussion of what is involved in Reformed ideas of "covenant," see S. M. Baugh, "Covenant Theology Illustrated: Romans 5 on the Federal Headship of Christ and Adam," *Modern Reformation* 9 (July/August 2000): 17-23.

⁷The *genus maiestaticum*, *genus idiomaticum*, and *genus apotelesmaticum*.

⁸Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 4 Volumes (Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1950-1957), 2:242: "Quenstedt sums up the truths on this point in full agreement with Scripture as follows: 'It is correctly said that *all* divine attributes are communicated to the human nature, likewise, that *certain* are not, and that *none* are communicated. All are communicated with regard to the indwelling and possession, but certain ones as regards predication and definite statement, as the operative which have state and action, among which we may name omnipotence, omniscience, etc. But this does not hold true of the quiescent attributes, as eternity, infinity, and the like. No attributes are communicated by way of transfusion from substance into another" (emphasis in original).

Beginning the theological task with a definition of God (theology) requires pitting one attribute against another, and gives the theologian the final word in ranking them. After the identifying and classifying of attributes—a task that defies agreement among theologians—they must be coordinated to avoid contradictions or conclusions that are unacceptable or at least detrimental to other parts of the system.⁹ Consider this often heard theological statement: “I cannot believe in a God who sends anyone to hell.” Even before the discussion begins, the conclusions are determined. What are the alternatives to a God who sends anyone to hell—a God who sends everyone to heaven? Is the Seventh-Day Adventist God who annihilates some to spare them of hell worthy of belief? A third option is that divine nonexistence is preferable to the survival of a capricious God who holds his rational creatures to some standards. Deriving theology from attributes, as theism does, resembles Darwin’s survival of the fittest.¹⁰ Defining God (theology) by first sifting the attributes also runs the risk of equivocation, since biblical terms are susceptible to philosophical meanings.¹¹ For example, divine love becomes synonymous with tolerance and leads to universalism.¹² Transcendence does not mesh with incarnation.

⁹Michael Horton understands that an isolated attribute of divine sovereignty can lead to doubt and despair, and so balances it with the gospel promises. Thus he suggests that “We must eliminate both the idol of a loving but weak god, and the idol of a strong but graceless god. For neither is great enough to capture the hearts and minds of our disenchanting age, especially in the face of evil, oppression, violence, and death.” “Is the *New News Good News?*” 18.

¹⁰Horton, “Is the *New News Good News?*” 11-14.

¹¹Francis Pieper also wrestles with the divine attributes: “No classification of the divine attributes is fully adequate. It, therefore, is of no theological consequence which classification is adopted, so long as the various attributes are defined according to Scripture alone” (*Christian Dogmatics*, 1:436). He then references Hoenecke, who says that none of the divisions are fully acceptable or objectionable. This frustration may suggest that the method of sorting through the attributes should be abandoned.

¹²For a treatment of this issue in contemporary theology, see Paul R. Hinlicky, “The Future of Tolerance,” in *All Theology is Christology*, Dean O. Wenthe and others, editors (Fort Wayne, Indiana: Concordia Theological Press, 2000), 375-389. For example: “[Love] is not some all-condoning leniency, which is indifferent to sin, and righteousness, but a costly grace. It is neither lenient nor permissive, but merciful to sinners” (388).

While wrongly defined axioms lead to a faulty theology, it is equally true that any axiomatic definition of God by itself and apart from the person of Jesus carries a potential for error. An idolatry of stone and wood is replaced by one of abstractions masquerading behind biblical terms.¹³ In a theology of abstract axioms (attributes), anything can go wrong and probably will. Love leads to universalism. Wrath leaves sinners at the sporadic, occasional, and hence undependable mercy of an otherwise angry and capricious God. Infinite freedom allows God an indefinite future, including His own nonexistence and perhaps ours as well.¹⁴ Internal self-perfection raises the questions of why God created in the first place and why He bothered to rescue disloyal creatures. These philosophical questions find their way into the theological enterprise, where they do not belong. A theology derived from divine attributes makes God's trinitarian character an afterthought. This is the impression—if not the confirmed results—of those dogmatics that first treat at length the doctrine of God (theology) and only then proceed to discuss the Trinity. This stricture applies to any approach that weighs the attributes in defining God. Nontrinitarian theistic *loci* could easily pass as conservative Unitarianism.

5. "All Theology is Christology" – All That Glitters Is Not Gold

Certainly no one thought that a christological theology meant that a seminary education would consist of one course and that all others would be sentenced to the recycling bin, but it is worth entertaining. A course of study focusing on the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth would assure the christological character of preaching and have advantages over mainline denominational curricula where students rarely get beyond stewardship, feminism, multiculturalism, world religions, and ecology—topics that have the aroma of a synergism that sidelines the deity's involvement in human affairs. Some may fear that a second person Unitarianism—a "Jesus religion"—is in view. Christomonism did surface

¹³Horton uses similar language: "We must eliminate both the idol of a loving but weak god, and the idol of a strong but graceless god," (see note 10 above).

¹⁴This view has been discussed in Paul Helm's "Openness Theology and God's 'Project' for the Future," *Modern Reformation* 8 (November-December, 1999): 46-50. This review of John Sanders' *The God Who Risks* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1998) points out that the other side of this argument for "a God whose future is at risk" is Arminianism, where man has the final word.

in medieval mysticism, in which the soul merged with Jesus, and later in Pietism, as is evidenced in "Jesus only" hymns.

A serious christological theology was offered by Karl Barth to counter the God-with-culture theology spawned in the Enlightenment and nurtured by Schleiermacher. If Christ is the only revelation of God, as Barth held, then there is no natural knowledge of God.¹⁵ With only Christ as "the Word of God," scriptures became the word of God in the existential moment. Christ was also the only sacrament and so no salvific role was assigned to baptism and the Lord's Supper was not even worthy of comment. Barth was a Zwinglian at heart.¹⁶ His christological axiom led him to place gospel before law and so law was subsumed into gospel.

"Gospel reductionism," which disrupted the LCMS in the 1970s, is another example of a christological theology gone awry. It correctly saw justification as the Augsburg Confession's controlling axiom, but also saw its other articles as secondary and expendable, a method reminiscent of Barth.¹⁷ Its Christology, like Barth's, was not anchored in a required historical definition of the person of Jesus. This opened the way for Bultmann's demythologizing, which left the historical Jesus to be

¹⁵Barth's christological bent was a reaction against Enlightenment Rationalists, Immanuel Kant and F. D. E. Schleiermacher. Rationalists derived knowledge of God from reason interpreting nature. Kant knew God from the moral imperative. Schleiermacher's God emerged from consciousness. In spite of their diversities, these forerunners of classical liberalism promoted theologies where Jesus no longer played an exclusive role in revealing God. Theology soon was replaced by *Religionsgeschichte*, which treated all religions as purely historical phenomena. More anthropological than theological, these approaches studied human quests for God and, in some cases, the human situation without reference to God. God-less religion existed long before He was declared dead. Even in some church-related colleges and universities, religion often assumes a place as another academic discipline among the arts and sciences, no longer entitled to a separate department. The value of theology-now-metamorphosed-into-religion was measured by its moral and cultural usefulness for society.

¹⁶David P. Scaer, *Baptism*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics Volume 11, John Stephenson, editor (Saint Louis: Luther Academy, 1999), 167-189, especially 170.

¹⁷With its recent alliance with the Episcopal Church, the ELCA has placed a great deal of importance on Article 28 of the Augsburg Confession, "On the Power of the Bishops." In effect the ELCA may have sacrificed Article 4, "Concerning Justification," in its agreement with Rome, and its agreement to eventually put in place bishops with apostolic success shifted the weight to Article 28. At this writing this issue has proved to be the most disruptive. See note 3.

dismantled by the historical-critical scholars. In addition, "gospel reductionism" took over Bultmann's definitions of faith and forgiveness as "psychological release" and "a finding of the self." With this definition of the gospel, all other historically distinctive Lutheran *loci* were expendable. These "gospel reductionists" amounted to a minuscule fraction of world Lutherans, yet this group was the catalyst for the formation of the ELCA. Their gospel definition became the basis for ELCA alliances with the Reformed and Episcopal communions.¹⁸ With a loosely-defined doctrine of justification as the theological axiom, Lutheran distinctives became *adiaphora* and could be negotiated away in ecumenical discussion—and were.¹⁹ Without a historically rooted Christology, justification becomes a barren pronouncement of forgiveness, a road down which much of contemporary Lutheranism has gone.²⁰

¹⁸See Department of Systematic Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary, "Joint Lutheran/Roman Catholic Declaration on Justification: A Response" and "A Formula of Agreement: A Theological Assessment," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 62 (April 1998): 83-106; 107-124.

¹⁹No groups, including conscientiously confessional Lutherans, are immune from defining theology around improperly or incompletely defined axioms that produce results at odds with other elements in the theological system. Defining "the means of grace" as the "word of God," with preaching, baptism, and the Lord's Supper as subcategories, has at least a superficial resemblance to Barth's principle. This may have accounted for its popularity among certain LCMS theologians. Such a "word of God" super-category allows one to give equal value to preaching, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Since the benefits of each are nearly identical, one who has heard the preached word will not be worse off if he abstains from Holy Communion. This dilemma of abstaining from another one of the "means" is often resolved by a threat, which makes the law God's final word, an approach which is hardly appropriate to a "means of grace" theology.

²⁰The gospel that served as the unifying principle of the ELCA also served the same purpose in that church's recent alliances with the Reformed, Episcopalians, and Moravians. However, how much of its integrity has remained intact is another question, especially in the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* with Rome.

Michael Root does address this question in regard to the Roman practice of indulgences in "The Jubilee Indulgence and the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*," *Pro Ecclesia* 9 (Fall 2000): 460-75, especially 464-74. Strangely, *Incarnationis Mysterium*, the bull establishing special indulgences, enunciates a christological principle that could lay the groundwork for Lutheran agreement with Rome: "The Incarnation of the Son of God and salvation which he has accomplished by his Death and Resurrection are therefore the true criterion for evaluating all that

Conscientiously christological theological constructions, which include our position, do not assure a properly ordered theology, as we have shown, but theological systems do need a central principle to prevent them from disintegrating into strands of unrelated topics (*loci*). By not recognizing characteristic axioms in other systems, especially in faultily framed christological schemes, Lutherans have inhaled inherently destructive theological principles and paid the consequences. Divisions among Christians ultimately result from conflicting axioms at the base of theological foundations.²¹

6. Christology at the Periphery

Some theological methods are deficient, not for their absence of Christology, but because they introduce it only after the doctrine of God (theology) has been defined. Thus, Christology is adjusted to fit the contours of a predetermined theology. (It should be the other way around.) Christology provides an ameliorating principle from an otherwise harsh and unacceptable God (theology). Benevolent characteristics that do not fit our idea of a stern God (classical theism) can be assigned to Christ. Shades of Marcion! Or, Jesus involves Himself in the human situation in a way that God by nature cannot. So He bridges the unbridgeable. Shades of Arius! By keeping Christology out of theological definition, our ideas of God are kept intact, and redemption becomes the afterthought of a deity who had the options of either non-redemption or redemption by other means. Christology becomes tangential, or at least secondary, to our definition of God (theology). Thus we are left with two different *loci*, theology and Christology, without a necessary relationship between them.

happens in time and every effort to make life more human" (464). Of course, if this principle were applied to sins committed in time, indulgences and purgatory would be abolished. Lutherans agree with Rome on the christological principle of theology, but make it the content of the doctrine of justification in a way that Rome does not. Christology provides Lutherans a common ground with Rome, a luxury they do not share with the Reformed.

²¹Our annual symposia not only reaffirm our commitment to the Lutheran Confessions, but are also intended to analyze our and others' methods.

7. Can a Christological Theology Be Trinitarian?

Attention must be given to whether a christological theology is preferred to or really different from a trinitarian one in which each divine person is interchangeable in shaping our theology, that is, our doctrine of God and the whole of theology. If we derive our doctrine of God from Jesus, can we begin our theology with either the Father or the Spirit? The answer is no. Essential to our orthodox faith is that one person of the Trinity exists in others and the external work of all is one.²² Christianity is conveniently, but wrongly, divided into "First Article, Second Article, and Third Article Christianity," as if a theology of each article was possible. In confessing God as Father, the First Article anticipates and requires belief in the Son. The Second Article's confession that Jesus is the Father's Son conceived by the Spirit draws the First and Third Articles into itself and assumes each. The *credo* of the First Article covers the other two. John Keble explains the primacy of the Second Article: "So, also the whole of the creed has reference to the one article, 'He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.' And the whole history of our Lord's life in the Gospel is the preparation for that one awful moment in which he breathed out his soul upon the cross."²³ Theology begins and ends with Jesus of Nazareth. Hence a christologically defined theology begins not with an abstract attribute or axiom (for example, love, sovereignty, and sanctification, among others) but with the historical person of Jesus and His self-definition. From His self-assertions and the evangelists' editorial references everywhere in the Gospels, we learn that He is God according to His own definitions. He is not a gnostic revealer of dark mysteries, but He completely envelops God, because God has completely enveloped Him. This Christology shapes the form and content of our doctrine of God (theology). The order of John 14:9, "He who has seen me has seen the Father," cannot be reversed so that in seeing the Father we see Jesus. When the doctrine of God (theology in the narrow sense) precedes Christology, the result is a provisional Unitarianism.

²²Even apart from the economic Trinity [*Opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*], each divine person exists in relation to the others [*perichoresis*]. Compare John 14:11: "I am in the Father and the Father in me."

²³"Old Testaments Types of the Cross," *Pro Ecclesia* 9 (Fall 2000): 432.

8. *Homo Factus Est* as the Revelation of God

By claiming that in Jesus the fulness of the godhead dwells bodily, Paul focuses not on Jesus' divine but human nature, that is, Jesus of Nazareth (Colossians 2:9). Asserting that God dwells in Jesus' divine nature is tautological and as unproductive as saying "God is God."²⁴ A christologically defined theology holds that Jesus' human nature reveals God and then goes one step further in locating the divine revelation in the humiliation (*homo factus est*). His crucifixion is the one, chief, historic moment of trinitarian self-revelation on which all divine revelatory moments depend. In the lowliness of His cross Jesus draws sinners into the inner recesses of God, where the Father and Son share an equal knowledge of each other (Matthew 11:25-30).²⁵ So the Spirit must also be understood christologically. He is defined by the cross.²⁶ Without this definition the Spirit becomes a *Weltgeist*, who makes God accessible without Jesus, and universalism results.²⁷ Matthew introduces his trinitarian theology (28:19)—the most complete one in the New Testament—only after his Christology, culminating in the cross, has been put in place. This Christology raises two questions. 1) Can God really be found in the self-abasement of Jesus (*homo factus est*)? 2) Is this self-abasement essentially the picture of who (what) God really is? In other words, is humiliation appropriate to God? A positive answer would

²⁴Lutheran Christology, in holding that the human nature receives all the divine attributes (*genus maiestaticum*) and that the deity is operative only through the human nature (*genus apotelesmaticum*), parts company with the Reformed.

²⁵The Johannine equivalents are in 6:44 and 12:32. Also see Martin Luther's "Heidelberg Disputation," especially thesis 21: "God can be found only in suffering and the cross . . ." *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 volumes, edited by J. Pelikan and H. T. Lehmann (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House and Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955-1986), 31:53. This, of course, leads Luther to make personal suffering a qualification for being a theologian (31:40).

²⁶See David P. Scaer, "*Cum Patre et Filio Adoratur: The Spirit Understood Christologically*," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 61 (January-April 1997): 93-112.

²⁷The Pentecost of Acts 2 concludes the giving of the Spirit who received His form in Jesus' baptism (Mark 1:10; John 1:32), life (Matthew 4:1), death (Matthew 27:50; John 19:30), and resurrection (John 20:22). The Spirit who proceeds from the Son (*filioque*) has been shaped by Jesus' death and resurrection, so that the Spirit of God becomes the Spirit of Jesus (Jn 16:13-14). *Incaratus est de spiritu sancti* begins to open the door to a trinitarian understanding of God and thus renders other theological attempts by themselves inadequate.

mean that *homo factus est* and not *incarnatus est* becomes the one controlling theological moment and the cross determines the character of Christian theology.²⁸ Our discussion now goes beyond the Lutheran-Reformed controversy over whether the human nature is capable of receiving the divine nature (*finitum [non] capax infiniti*). At issue is whether the humiliation (*homo factus est*) tells us something about God that we would not otherwise know. It does. By beginning with the cross, theology is no longer obligated to answer the philosophical questions asked of the incarnation, a practice that arose in the patristic period and remains operative in any method that defines God (theology) first.²⁹ God gives us the perfect revelation of who He is in the agony of the Crucified, who is the face of God. In the dying of Jesus we see God's glory. Crucifixion is not merely the door to the divine reality, but is the event in which that reality is now present and hidden. The inscrutable God is accessible in the crucified Jesus in a way that surpasses all other ways. In the cross the Father and His intentions for us are known. The cross is both God's humiliation and exaltation. In it Jesus honors and glorifies God and God honors and glorifies Jesus, and the Spirit's mission is defined.³⁰ The cross is without contradiction, both humiliation and exaltation. Christology, defined in the cross, may conflict with a philosophically

²⁸Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 46: "The profoundest points of New Testament Christology occur when the inclusion of the exalted Christ in the divine identity entails the inclusion of the crucified Christ in the divine identity, and when the christological pattern of humiliation and exaltation is recognized as revelatory of God, indeed as the definitive revelation of who God is." See also 56-61, and in particular, "The identity of God — who God is — is revealed as much in self-abasement and service as it is in exaltation and rule. The God who is high can also be low, because God is God not in seeking his own advantage but in self-giving. Only the Servant can also be the Lord" (61). Much of Bauckham's material is found in his "The Worship of Jesus in Philippians 2:9-11," in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2*, edited by Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 128-139.

²⁹Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 60: "The question is not: how can the infinite become a finite creature, how can the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God take on human limitations?" Bauckham suggests the real contrast is not between the divine and human natures, but between the image of God as the exalted emperor and the servant (61-62).

³⁰Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 66: "Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39).

defined doctrine of God to the point of scandal and embarrassment for even believers (John 6:60-61, 66-67), but here Israel's Redeemer has taken on flesh in Jesus as Emmanuel, "God with us." The human Jesus receives divine honor and glory.³¹ Divine uniqueness is not compromised, but expressed by incarnation and crucifixion (Philippians 2:6-11).³² "Jesus, the New Testament writers are saying, belongs inherently to *who God is*."³³ The crucified Christ belongs to the divine identity.³⁴ "This radical self-renunciation was [Christ's] way of expressing and enacting his equality with God, and *therefore* ([Philippians 2] verse 9) it qualified him to exercise the unique divine sovereignty over all things."³⁵ Humiliation, no less than exaltation, belongs to the identity of God.³⁶ The cross is the glorification of both the Father and the Son (John 17:1). Jesus' going to the Father then embraces both the cross's humiliation and His assuming His place at God's right hand (John 14:12; 16:17; 20:17).³⁷ In an act of self-giving the Father begets the Son and gives procession to the Spirit, and from this self-giving He creates, redeems, and sanctifies. The God who gives of Himself in begetting the Son also gives of Himself in creating and in sacrificial redemption, and in all these eternal and temporal acts, glorifies Himself. Christ's giving of Himself is an extension both of His eternally giving Himself as the Son to the Father, and the Father's eternal giving of Himself in begetting the Son. God's love for the world flows from His love for Jesus before the world was made (John 3:16; 17:24). God's love, out of which He begets the Son, is love's purest form, and out of this love He sends the Son for our redemption (John 3:15). God not only loves, but is love (1 John 4:16), and so the Trinity is love in its highest and original form. Thus the sending of the Son is not the act of a

³¹In Matthew's nativity account the Magi worship the child (2:11) and in his resurrection account the Eleven worship Jesus (28:16-17).

³²Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 4, 28.

³³Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 47.

³⁴Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 48.

³⁵Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 58.

³⁶Bauckham, *God Crucified*, 61. Also, "Jesus' self-humiliation actually is exaltation by God" (67).

³⁷I suspect that some Lutherans use "S.D.G.," *Soli Deo Gloria*, synergistically, to give God some credit for their accomplishments. It might carry the ideas of the self-contentment and the absence of pain in God and in us. Consider the Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647): "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy Him forever." More basic to defining God's glory might be self-giving.

sovereign God arbitrarily choosing among options, but is motivated by His eternal love for the Son (John 3:35). As R. Scott Clark has said, "In this case, we know that the Trinity we worship is no static deity, but rather there are dynamic relations among the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. It is out of that dynamic, loving fellowship that both creation and redemption have emerged."³⁸ In begetting the Son, the Father gives of Himself and in this self-giving He knows Himself and is known to the Son as Father. The Son responds to the Father not out of resentful obligation or duty, but out of the love He receives from the Father. This love gives Him life as the Son (John 5:26). The inter-trinitarian relationship is necessarily marked with a self-giving of supernatural pathos. In sacrificing His Son by crucifixion (*homo factus est*), God is not doing something inexplicably alien to His being (though it might be to our view of God), but accomplishes what intrinsically belongs to who He is.

Theology and Christology are coordinates, with the latter informing the former. So joined, they now shape faith and ethics. Commands to love God and the neighbor (Matthew 22:27-39; Mark 12:30-31; Luke 10:27) are not arbitrary regulations (law) of a sovereign deity, but necessary extensions of the Father's eternal love in begetting the Son, a love seen in offering Him as a sacrifice (John 15:9-17). This divine love calls upon His creatures to respond in kind (1 John 4:19-21) and is the content of the Old Testament (Matthew 22:32-40). The true image of the Old Testament God and the prototype of the trinitarian and christological revelation is Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. Faith as trust in God includes loving God with all that we have so that no room is allowed for self-love. The command to love God is not an abstract ethical axiom (law), but first describes Jesus giving Himself over by death to God in love for us. God is the despised Samaritan, who in loving His enemies fulfills His own command to love them (objective justification) and reveals who He really is. Our loving the otherwise unlovable neighbor in place of ourselves emerges from the mysteries of the *homo factus est*, then the *incarnatus est*, and finally the Trinity itself. In sacrificing themselves for others, Christians are not only doing the Christ-like thing but the God-like thing. Thus Peter's death glorifies God (John 21:19) because his death resembles

³⁸"The Splendor of the Three-in-One God," *Modern Reformation* 8 (September-October 1999): 38.

and shares in Christ's death, in which God's glory is quintessentially revealed (John 17:1). A christological theology embraces the commands to love God and the neighbor. Behind these images are not rules (law), but divine self-sacrifice that binds together that enterprise we call theology. The self-sacrificial character of the trinitarian nature does not leave us at the whim of an arbitrary God. Rather He rescues, will rescue, and must rescue those who cannot rescue themselves. He loves those who without Him can only love themselves. Understanding God as self-giving may seem to contradict a theology which identifies, selects, and coordinates attributes. God's self-giving within His trinitarian life (*genitum non factum*) and in Christ (*homo factus est*) is not an abstract axiom, but is an accessible reality in the cross (*crucifixus*). The cross reflects, contains, and embodies the trinitarian mystery of the eternal self-giving Father who begets the Son and gives procession to the Spirit. Christology shares in the reality of who God is (theology) and reveals it:

At that time Jesus declared, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will. *All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*" (Matthew 11:25-30).

A christological theology does not detract from our doctrine of God (theology), but opens it up to the fuller reality that God's intentions are inherent in His essence. In other words, God does what He does because of who He is. A christologically defined theology does not replace justification as the description of sinners' relation to God, but provides it with the necessary christological foundation and content. William C. Weinrich writes about his "conviction that the Man, Jesus [is] the Revelation of the Father and the Bearer of the Holy Spirit, so that to speak theologically [is] to speak Christologically."³⁹

³⁹"The Face of Christ as the Hope of the World: Missiology as Making Christ Present." *All Theology is Christology* (Fort Wayne, Indiana: Concordia Theological Press, 2000), 215-227. Weinrich also notes Bauckham's contribution to this discussion (219).

N. T. Wright provides a fitting conclusion:

The real humiliation of the incarnation and the cross is that one who was himself God, and who never during the whole process stopped being God, could embrace such a vocation. The real theological emphasis of the hymn [Philippians 2], therefore, is not simply a new view of Jesus. *It is a new understanding of God.* Against the age-old attempts of human beings to make God in their own (arrogant, self-glorifying image) image, God reveals the truth about what it meant to be God. Underneath this is the conclusion, all-important in present christological debate: incarnation and even crucifixion are to be seen as *appropriate* vehicles for the dynamic self-revelation of God.⁴⁰

A difference in Christology's role in theology is reflected in varying interpretations of Philippians 2. For recent treatments of the stakes in the argument see the essays in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2*, edited by Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998). The *New International Version* in translating 2:6 as "did not grasp at equality with God" favors the traditional Reformed view that is not fully comfortable in ascribing God-like qualities to Christ's human nature (*genus maiestaticum*), which is the Lutheran position. Strangely, the *NIV* serves as the official LCMS worship Bible. For a discussion of the exegetical options, see Gerald F. Hawthorne, "In the Form of God and Equal with God (Philippians 2:6)," *Where Christology Began*, 99-110.

⁴⁰Quoted from Hawthorne, "In the Form of God," 104 and following. Original found in N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 83-84. [The first italics are this author's; the second is in the original].