

Abstract

“THE NON-KENOTIC CHRISTOLOGY OF WILLIAM PORCHER DUBOSE:
A RESPONSE TO FRANCIS J. HALL”

TERESA WOOTEN DAILY

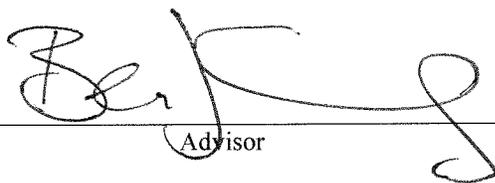
Thesis under the direction of Dr. Benjamin King

In the late nineteenth century, General Theological Seminary professor Francis J. Hall claimed that University of the South professor and fellow Anglican, William Porcher DuBose, subscribed to a kenotic Christology. The goal of this thesis is to evaluate whether this characterization of DuBose’s incarnational theology is warranted. The thesis begins with an exploration of DuBose’s Christology with its personalistic, progressive, and Spirit-based Incarnation. Next Hall’s traditional understanding of the Incarnation, with a Christological union that safeguards attributes of both the divine and human natures, is examined, along with an overview of Hall’s anti-kenotic arguments. Because the Christology of German theologian Isaak August Dorner is the model for DuBose’s theology, and given that Dorner himself was avidly anti-kenotic, a survey of Dorner’s theology follows in the hope that it may illumine elements in DuBose’s Christology that point away from Kenoticism.

Circling back to Hall’s claim that DuBose embraces a kenotic Christology, each feature in his theology that resonates with Kenoticism is considered. The conclusion is reached that DuBose’s incarnational theology, with its personalistic view of reality and the gradual union of human and divine natures in Christ, does not fulfill the essential feature of a kenotic Christology – the abandonment or suspension of some attributes of the Logos during the Incarnation. Finally, DuBose’s underlying theological motivation –

to articulate an ethical Christological union rooted in mutuality, self-consciousness, and freedom – is presented as an expression of Christian mysticism, although the Personalist worldview that forms the basis of this divine-human union is incongruous with his sympathy for the Confederate South.

Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. J. S.', written over a horizontal line.

Advisor

Date

April 2, 2021

The Non-Kenotic Christology of William Porcher DuBose:
A Response to Francis J. Hall

by

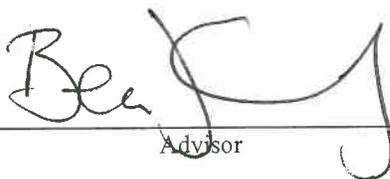
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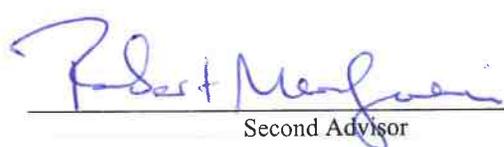
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Introduction

The Incarnation, with its central tenet of the union of divine and human natures in the Person of Christ, is the core teaching of Christian orthodoxy; however, the “otherness” of the divine means that we are left without a simple way to conceive of this union. How can divinity and humanity come together in one person in such a way that the very nature of the eternal God is revealed in and through the flesh of a human being? Official ecclesiastical history contends that this question was settled in 451 CE at the Council of Chalcedon in favor of a non-competitive representation of the divine and human natures in Christ – “two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence.”¹ However, a simple acceptance of this definition as the Church’s final word on a two-nature Christology would overlook the historical challenges to Chalcedonian orthodoxy that still influence much of contemporary theology.

One such challenge to Chalcedonian Christology is Kenoticism, a theological movement that originated in mid-nineteenth century Germany. The word “kenosis” gained familiarity in Christianity largely through the second chapter of Paul’s letter to the Philippians, particularly in its assertion that “Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied

1. Episcopal Church, *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church: Together with the Psalter or Psalms of David According to the Use of the Episcopal Church* (New York: Church Publishing, 1979), 864.

himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.”² The Greek word translated “emptied” in the passage above is a form of the verb *kenoō* (κενόω) – “to empty.” While still retaining its reference to Christ’s self-emptying in a broad Christian context, the term “kenosis” also became identified with the theological claim that, in the words of contemporary Scottish theologian David Brown, the divine nature in Christ is “committed in the incarnation not merely to a symbolic drawing alongside humanity but also to an actual ontological entering into the human condition with some real change in divinity itself.”³ In other words, to maintain the integrity of Christ’s humanity, the union of the divine and human natures requires that some divine attributes be either abandoned or concealed during the earthly incarnation.

According to Brown, the convergence of three significant historical changes in the mid-nineteenth century led many theologians to embrace a kenotic Christology: 1) the increasing prominence of biblical criticism, with its emphasis on a reading of the text both unbiased by other forms of Christian tradition and enlightened by historical reconstructions; 2) growth in the field of psychology, offering a greater understanding of human development, consciousness, and personality; 3) new philosophical insights,

2. Philippians 2: 5b-7a. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced employ the *New Revised Standard Bible*, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, 1989.

3. David Brown, *Divine Humanity: Kenosis and the Construction of a Christian Theology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011), 2. In comparison, given the prominent role that his theology will play in this thesis, it is interesting to note the emphasis on abandonment in Francis J. Hall’s definition: “The kenotic theory may be briefly described as maintaining that the Divine Logos, in order to take our earthly nature upon Him and submit in reality to its earthly conditions and limitations, abandoned somewhat at least of what was His before He became incarnate.” Francis J. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory: Considered with Particular Reference to Its Anglican Form and Arguments* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898), 1.

particularly those of Hegel, whose philosophy included the self-realization of the divine in history and who used “kenosis” to describe the process of self-consciousness that comes through movement toward the other.⁴ Into the midst of these changes and theological responses to them came two theologians who would find themselves on opposite sides of the debate over kenotic Christology.⁵

William Porcher DuBose (1836-1918) and Francis Joseph Hall (1857-1932) were both active Episcopal theologians in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century, the former at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, and the latter at the General Theological Seminary in New York City. The geographic distance between them was approximately 800 miles; but, theologically, they were separated by significantly different understandings of the Incarnation, a distance which proved more difficult to traverse than the physical ground that lay between them. Hall subscribed to a Chalcedonian understanding of the Incarnation, with its non-competitive relationship between the human and divine natures of Christ, while DuBose’s

4. Brown, 1. Pages in Brown’s work on which a deeper understanding of each historical change is located are as follows: on the rise in biblical criticism (173-178), on the field of psychology (178-183), on Hegelian philosophy as background (223-230).

5. It would be wrong to assume that those who embraced Kenoticism were always among those less devoted to Christian tradition. In fact, according to both Brown and Hall, one of the main reasons to do so for some with a high view of church tradition (such as Anglo-Catholics devoted to the Oxford Movement) was that it allowed one to explain the words of Jesus that have been shown by biblical criticism to be historically untrue without sacrificing a high view of scripture. Hall quotes the following from the *Church Quarterly Review* from January 1898 (page 298): “The readiness to accept modern theories of kenoticism, ... in certain quarters, seems to proceed not so much from the supposed satisfactory nature of the theories themselves, as from the fact that they afford an easy mode of getting rid of certain sayings of our Lord about Noah and Moses and David and Jonah. If this be so, those who adopt such theories must beware lest in trying to save something the lose all.” Francis J. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 21.

vision of the Incarnation emphasized a gradual union of the two natures in which the work of the human nature of Christ was active and indispensable. For DuBose, any work in Christ done by the divine nature must also be work done by the human nature; otherwise, the freedom and agency inherent in personhood is violated. This emphasis on the gradual achievement of the human nature in Christ and the subsequent deification of humanity ultimately led Hall to accuse DuBose of embracing a kenotic Christology. However, a deeper examination of the influences on DuBose's theology may hold the key to his exoneration from that particular charge.

In the chapters that follow, I will argue that DuBose expounds a progressive, spirit-based incarnation that finds its roots both in the theology of Isaak August Dorner (1809 – 1884) and in the language and fundamental principles of Personalism – neither of which considers the divine and human natures to be incompatible or mutually exclusive.⁶ In fact, far from the divine and human natures being simply non-competitive, the shared elements that constitute personhood are the very basis of spiritual fellowship between the divine and human. Therefore, the incarnational theology of William Porcher DuBose does not entail an abandonment (or a holding in abeyance) of divine attributes and, as such, does not represent a kenotic Christology.

In the most expansive articulation of his Christology, found in *The Reason of Life*, DuBose describes evolution as an Aristotelian process – the process of life coming to itself through the divine logos immanent in all creation as the final cause. With the

6. As DuBose did not use footnotes in his work and only very rarely mentioned any other theologian (except in the course of tracing the history of the Ecumenical Councils), a circumstantial case will be made for the influence of early Personalists, such as Borden Parker Bowne, in his work.

emergence of reason, consciousness, and freedom in the creation of human beings, however, the goal for which we were created is no longer attainable by a simple unfolding of nature. Instead, our end is found only in God whose supreme personhood transcends us. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is the pathway to this spiritual fellowship with God for which we were created. In the first chapter, we will explore DuBose's Christology in detail. This will first require attention to several building blocks of DuBose's theology – the theory of evolution, Aristotelian philosophy, and a personalist perspective (characterized by the mutually transcendent relationship between God as Infinite Spirit and human beings as finite spirit). Next we will examine the progressive nature of the Incarnation as dependent on the capacity of human nature to receive God, as well as the role of the Holy Spirit in the subjective appropriation of the divine nature. Throughout the chapter, we will consider the personalistic language and commitment to freedom and self-determination that underlies the entire process.

In the second chapter, we turn to the incarnational theology of Francis J. Hall. Hall uses traditional Chalcedonian Christology to paint a portrait of the Christological union that safeguards the attributes of both the divine and human natures, a union without loss to either side of the equation. Hall recognizes that the place where many theologians stray off course, when expounding the traditional Christology of two natures in one person, is in the attempt to give the term "person" positive content. In Chalcedonian Christology, the term "person" is devoid of content. It is the nature – not the person – which possesses will, consciousness, intelligence, and emotion (what we might call *personality*); the person of Christ is simply that which possesses the two natures, the locus of the hypostatic union. This confusion of terms, per Hall, underlies much of

modern Kenoticism.⁷ After examining in more detail his rendition of Chalcedonian Christology, we will explore the theological missteps, according to Hall, that lead to a kenotic understanding of the Incarnation.

In DuBose's last book, *Turning Points in My Life*, he outlines his own journey of faith. Although the influence of the theology of Isaak August Dorner is notable throughout all DuBose's work, here we find his explicit claim to have made a life study of Dorner's multi-volume work, *The Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*.⁸ A history of the doctrine of the Incarnation, this great work ends with a synopsis of Dorner's own incarnational theology – a theology that is explored further in Dorner's other works with which DuBose was also likely familiar. In Chapter Three, we will explore the incarnational theology of Isaak Dorner, with added attention to the elements in his theology that can be found in the theology of DuBose as well – particularly the beliefs that both the divine and human natures in Christ are of a spiritual and rational constitution (and, therefore, are neither fully exclusive nor contradictory) and that the union of human and divine natures in Christ occurs gradually as the capacity of the human nature to receive the divine nature increases over time.⁹ Like Hall, Dorner was an avid opponent of Kenoticism and embraced a progressive, spiritual incarnation *precisely*

7. Francis J. Hall, *The Incarnation* (New York: Longman's, Green, and Company, 1915), 102-106.

8. William Porcher DuBose, *Turning Points in My Life* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912), 57.

9. Isaak August Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine 3*, translated by Alfred Cave and J.S. Banks (New York: T & T Clark, 1896), 319-326 (on the spiritual and rational constitution of the divine and human natures), 328-335 (on the gradual union of the two natures of Christ).

as an alternative to kenotic theories. Therefore, an examination of Dorner's understanding of how his own Christology sidesteps Kenoticism may aid in our investigation of Hall's justification, or lack thereof, in designating DuBose a Kenoticist.

As DuBose appropriated key aspects of Dorner's theology into his own, he did so using the language and principles of American Personalism. This move on DuBose's part is not that surprising; American Personalism on the whole grew out of German speculative theism, a tradition with which Dorner himself was associated.¹⁰ Borden Parker Bowne – whose 1908 book *Personalism* became a touchstone text for personalist philosophy in the United States – studied in Germany with Herman Lotze (1817-1881), a colleague of Isaak Dorner in speculative theism. Bowne transcended the work of Lotze by placing freedom on equal footing with self-consciousness as an essential characteristic of personhood.¹¹ At the end of Chapter Three, we will look briefly at the incorporation of several aspects of American Personalism into DuBose's theology, a shift especially prominent in a later work, *The Reason of Life* (1911), which was published after Bowne's seminal text. DuBose's embrace of personalistic principles include the continued conviction that reason and spirit form the irreducible foundation of a transcendent relationship between infinite and finite being, a conviction that is incompatible with the overarching motives of kenotic Christologies.

After having examined the Christology of DuBose, Hall, and Dorner, a detailed look at passages from DuBose's work used by Hall to illustrate the erroneous

10. Jan Olof Bengtsson, *The Worldview of Personalism: Origins and Early Developments* (New York: Oxford, 2006), 6 and 22.

11. Bengtsson, 59.

assumptions of Kenoticists will afford us the opportunity to respond to each of Hall's claims about the kenotic nature of DuBose's Christology. In addition, some features in DuBose's theology that resonate with common elements in Kenoticism, while not specifically mentioned by Hall as being present in his theology, will also be discussed. This focused analysis will demonstrate how a theology that combines an ontology of personhood and a gradual, Spirit-dependent incarnation does not require the abandonment of any divine qualities for a personal union between the divine and human natures in Christ to take place.

Finally, the various strands of our theological journey will come together. A final argument will be made that, while some characteristics of DuBose's Christology may fit into patterns recognized by Hall in kenotic Christologies, the progressive, spirit-based Incarnation of DuBose's own personalist theology does not require any change in the divine nature of Christ to preserve an authentic humanity. Therefore, despite Hall's claims otherwise, DuBose is not a genuine Kenoticist. Brief final words will be said about how DuBose's theology may be relevant in today's world, with particular attention to DuBose's motivation for the Christology he adopted and how issues of race intersect with his own history and personalistic theology.

Chapter One

The Person of Christ in the Theology of William Porcher DuBose

In his major work of theological philosophy, William Porcher DuBose writes: “Religion can never cease to submit itself to the perpetual judgment of human experience; nor experience to be directly responsible and accountable for its recognition of the reality of religion. They exist for each other, and their unity is the only solution of the question of life and destiny.”¹ Theology is born out of and tested by experience and, for DuBose, this experience includes conversion experiences, the loss of loved ones, and the destruction and reinterpretation of an entire way of life. Each of these events in his life was fertile ground for working out his own salvation, a key feature in DuBose’s incarnational theology. It is fitting, therefore, that we begin an exploration of DuBose’s theology with a brief biographical sketch.

DuBose was born on April 11, 1836 in Winnsboro, South Carolina and grew up nearby on his father’s plantations of Farmington and Roseland – formed and shaped in a life of wealth that included 204 enslaved persons.² He completed high school at the Citadel (where he underwent a conversion experience), received his college education at University of Virginia, and then entered the diocesan seminary in Camden, South

1. William Porcher DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, (New York: Longman’s, 1912), 7.

2. W. Eric Emerson, and Karen Stokes, ed. *Faith, Valor, and Devotion: The Civil War Letters of William Porcher DuBose* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), xv.

Carolina. After a year in seminary, he joined and served the Confederate Army, during which time he was wounded three times and held as prisoner of war. On furlough in 1863, he married his first wife, Nannie Peronneau, with whom he would later have two daughters and two sons.

After discharge from the army, DuBose was ordained to the diaconate and assigned to the post of chaplain for the Confederacy. Following the war, DuBose returned home to find his previous way of life in ruins. He served as rector of two South Carolina parishes before moving to Sewanee in 1871 to become chaplain and professor of moral science. In his years on the mountain, DuBose taught courses in biblical studies, languages, homiletics, and systematic divinity. But while his life in academics began to flourish, his personal life during his early years at Sewanee held significant loss. Nannie died in 1873, and their second son Samuel died a year later. DuBose would go on to marry Maria Louise Yerger in 1874, a marriage which lasted until her death in 1887.

DuBose organized the first Theological Department at Sewanee, formally established in 1878; it would later become the School of Theology. He served as the school's second dean from 1894 until he retired in 1908. In teaching DuBose found his true calling; for not only did his students find themselves changed through the encounter, but he was shaped by it as well. A reunion of DuBose's students was held in August of 1911, and the papers he delivered each morning about his own spiritual and theological journey were collected and published as the book *Turning Points in My Life*. DuBose wrote of the reunion: "When I looked into the face of that body of men, representing all of the forty years of my service, I felt all that I could only imperfectly say: that if they felt that in their four years with me that I had been something to them, I felt that in my forty

years with them they had been everything to me: if, so far as human agency can go, I had in a little measure been the making of them, they had in far fuller measure been the making of me.”³ This statement embodies the mutuality and progressive becoming that marked DuBose’s entire soteriological Christology.

William Porcher DuBose died in Sewanee on August 18, 1918 at the age of eighty-two.⁴ He left behind a legacy of theological writings, including seven books: *The Soteriology of the New Testament* (1892), *The Ecumenical Councils* (1896), *The Gospel in the Gospels* (1906), *The Gospel According to St. Paul* (1907), *High Priesthood and Sacrifice: An Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* (1908), *The Reason of Life* (1911), and *Turning Points in My Life* (1912).

These works express in varying degrees the spirit of open enquiry that marked DuBose’s theology. This freedom to walk new paths blazed by reason and experience was modeled in his pedagogy, which he describes in the following way:

As my system and method of Exegesis grew and took shape in the thought and life of the class, questions naturally arose, and the newness of the presentation was often an irritant as well as a stimulant. I held that my place and part was in the mine, not in the mint, of the truth of Christianity, that free enquiry and investigation, not dogma (which would have its proper place after), was in order with us. Everything was to be tested and verified, according to our Lord’s prescription, in the light and in the terms of human nature, human life, and human destiny. All that was true for us ought to be true to us, and would be if we were in a state of correspondence with the truth.⁵

3. William Porcher DuBose, *Turning Points in My Life* (New York: Longman’s, 1912), 9.

4. The biographical information in this section comes from the following sources: Robert Boak Slocum. *The Theology of William Porcher DuBose* (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 1-19; Jon Alexander, ed., *William Porcher DuBose: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 5-27.

5. DuBose, *Turning Points in My Life*, 7-8.

This spirit of free enquiry was not merely a pedagogical method for DuBose; it was grounded in the claim that the discovery of truth, like faith, is the ongoing, individual work of humanity: “Truth is not truth when it ceases to be plastic, and faith is only faith in the making. We cannot simply receive it, for then it is not yet ours; and we can never finish making it, for it ends only in all truth and all knowledge of the truth.”⁶ The quest for truth is an historical process for DuBose, and just as the Church went through struggles to articulate a corporate faith in the early centuries of Christianity, so must each individual do the same as that person strives to make that faith his or her own.⁷ All truth must be tested in the crucible of human experience, because the Gospel is the truth of ourselves in God and of God in ourselves.⁸

It may be tempting to assume that this willingness to question the doctrines of the Church represents a skepticism of Church authority – a “low” ecclesiology on DuBose’s

6. DuBose, *Turning Points in My Life*, 58.

7. DuBose recognizes that this spirit of freedom in the individual search for truth may be objectionable to those who see the great questions of faith as closed and predetermined by the dogma of the Church, and to those he gives assurance that the power of a catholic truth will indeed withstand such enquiry: “A few bewildered and weary souls, to escape doubt and in despair of any self-determining power of truth or life in itself, will from time to time seek, and perhaps find, refuge and rest in the quiet places where they are no longer in question and under the assurance that they are infallibly settled. But there is in fact no such rest for a really living and a really thinking world. The whole truth of Scripture and the whole mind of the Church are not dead but live things. The fact of their being alive and forever obliged to keep themselves alive will not preclude the possibility of their gaining for themselves assent, consent, and agreement; of their attaining even, as every other kind of truth does, a catholic unity and permanence of form and expression ... And there is every advantage in truth’s being under the necessity of being always our truth, and not merely that of other thinkers of another age.” William Porcher DuBose, *The Gospel According to Saint Paul* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907), 12-13.

8. DuBose, *The Gospel According to Saint Paul*, 14.

part – but to do so would be to misread its origin. In DuBose’s ecclesiology, unity is the mark of the Church that takes center stage; in fact, it is unity that encompasses the other marks of “holiness, universality, and perpetuity.”⁹ Unity is so foundational to the nature of the Church, DuBose argues, that the Church must stretch its boundaries when it comes to a uniformity of beliefs:

It is not that Christian truth and Christian life are not definite and determined things. It is not that unity is not an essential note in Christianity. It is that unity is so essential and so necessary a thing in Christianity that it must not be sacrificed to the demands of an impossible uniformity; that the limits of uniformity must be stretched to their utmost in the interest of even the lowest practicable unity. Why, so far as my own willingness goes, shall I not be visibly as well as invisibly in the one body of Christ with every devout Catholic and every devout Protestant; and with not only every devout Christian, but every one who calls himself Christian?¹⁰ The point is that the unity and the devoutness so much to be desired will much more certainly be obtained by inclusion in the Church as the divine way and means to them than by exclusion from the Church until they have been otherwise acquired.¹¹

For DuBose, this attitude of generous inclusivity seems to increase – not decrease – the truth held in the mind of the Church. Truth is corporate in nature. No one of us holds all truth, and even the branch of Christianity that seems incomplete has some truth capable

9. William Porcher DuBose, “The Unity of the Church,” in Donald S. A Armentrout, *A DuBose Reader: Selections from the Writings of William Porcher DuBose* (Sewanee, Tennessee: University of the South, 1984), 195.

10. The writings of William Porcher DuBose, Francis J. Hall, and Isaak August Dorner reflect the time and culture in which they lived. Throughout this thesis I have chosen to leave non-inclusive language in their writings and those of other theologians; however, inclusive language for God and human beings is used in my own writing.

11. DuBose, *Turning Points in My Life*, 126-127.

12. DuBose writes: “I hold that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is so true and so living in every part that he who truly possesses and truly uses any broken fragment of it may find in that fragment something – just so much – of gospel for his soul and of salvation for his life.” William Porcher DuBose, *The Gospel in the Gospels* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908), 4.

of bringing healing to one's soul and life.¹² Thus, understanding diversity as a contributing factor to both unity and truth, DuBose offers his own theological creativity to the Church, trusting that any error will be lovingly corrected over time by "the higher truth of the Scriptures and the larger wisdom of the Church."¹³ DuBose's gracious understanding of the historical process by which truth becomes known provides him with the freedom to rethink classical doctrine through the lens of the contemporary intellectual movements of his time.

The Building Blocks of DuBose's Christology

Two intellectual movements of the nineteenth century, as well as the ancient philosophy of Aristotle, are inextricably woven throughout DuBose's incarnational theology. The first such contemporary movement grows out of the publication of *On the Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin in 1859, after which things came to be increasingly regarded (perhaps even defined) by their development. Some Christians feared that natural selection's role in the creation of species may discourage belief in God, since one of the strongest arguments for the existence of God throughout time was the presence in creation of design, or final cause.¹⁴ However, when viewed through a wider perspective of the earth as a changing and growing organism, evolutionary biology may ultimately have been responsible for a revival in teleology.¹⁵

13. Slocum, *The Theology of William Porcher DuBose*, 96.

14. J. R. Illingworth. "The Incarnation in Relation to Development," in *Lux Mundi*, edited by Charles Gore (London: John Murray, 1890), 189.

15. Illingworth (1848-1915), an Anglo-Catholic priest and member of the Oxford

We see this turn to the language of organism in DuBose's primary work on philosophical theology, *The Reason of Life*. He writes the following:

Creation or evolution, we are told, is *ab initio* not a mechanism but an organism: it was not manufactured like a watch but grew as a flower. And the organic is living, organism is the product and expression of life. What else than life can differentiate its unity into the wonderful diversity of organs and functions, and then integrate that diversity into a yet more wonderful unity again? To say that our universe is an organism, that it was not made but grew, is in itself to say that it was the product and not the cause of life; life is logically and causatively prior to its organs and functions.¹⁶

With the first chapter of John as the theological underpinning, DuBose identifies this life which is logically and causatively prior to creation as nothing less than the Logos immanent in all creation as both first cause (the cause of its existence) and final cause (the end for which a particular thing or organism was created).¹⁷

A theology characterized by a divine principle residing within creation must walk the line between complete identification with God and complete distinction from God,

Movement, held an Aristotelian view of evolution similar to that of DuBose. He defended this view of evolution as consistent with the Creed: "All this is in perfect harmony with our Christian creed, that all things were made by the Eternal Reason; but more than this, it illustrates and is illustrated by the further doctrine of His indwelling presence in the things of His creation; rendering each of them at once a revelation and a prophecy, a thing of beauty and finished workmanship, worthy to exist for its own sake, and yet a step to higher purposes, an instrument for grander work." Illingworth, 191.

16. William Porcher DuBose, *The Reason of Life* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1911), 24.

17. "What has come into being in him was life..." (John 1:3b-4a). "The material universe is a concrete expression of an ideal principle, which not only as first-cause gives it existence, but as final-cause gives it reason, meaning, and purpose." DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, 13.

between pantheism and deism.¹⁸ Guarding against the identification of the Logos within creation with the transcendent God, DuBose explains:

...the world is God's utterance or outurance of Himself. The ideal, formal, formative principle in it, which we see so struggling, and often seemingly so ineffectually struggling, for adequate and full expression through it, is nevertheless His Logos, or Reason, or Word – which is Himself.¹⁹

Attempting to prevent a collapse into pantheism, DuBose also safeguards the distinction between God immanent within creation and the fullness of God in Godself:

... that which was for God the beginning, for the world is the end: reason in God is eternally complete and perfect; reason in the world is incomplete, imperfect, and progressive: it has to make and remake itself through deaths and births; to become itself through a thousand self-contradictions which have to be survived and overcome. There is a deity immanent in the world which is God, and yet is not God: which as God cannot be thwarted or defeated, and yet, which unlike God, is constantly thwarted and defeated, is resisted, grieved, quenched in ourselves, blasphemed and contradicted in the world without us. ... How can the Logos who is God be incomplete or imperfect? I answer that He is so in the world, as its growing and self-revealing reason and meaning and end or purpose; but God's reason in and of the world is not other than His Reason in and of Himself.²⁰

18. DuBose writes: "It might be said that the failure to properly distinguish is pantheism, the failure to properly identify them is deism; while the proper adjustment of distinction and identification is a true theism." DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, 16. Reason, whether human or divine, is inseparable from personality. Human reason in the form of logic or other thought continues to exist even after the death of its human author. However, the Reason of God as the "ideal and formative principle of the world" immanent within the world cannot be separated from God, since the world is sustained only in and through God. DuBose uses this example to explain the immanence of God within creation as opposed to the detachment of human reason from its creation. *The Reason of Life*, 13-16.

19. DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, 16.

20. DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, 19-20.

In this attempt to both connect and distinguish God in the world and God in Godself, we find an ancient building block of DuBose's theology that permeates his entire work.²¹

The philosophy of Aristotle allows DuBose to bridge not only the chasm between the immanence and transcendence of God, but also that between religion and science – religion with its emphasis on final cause, and science with its essential tenet that all things create themselves through laws and processes that are immanent within themselves.²² The law of being that endows purpose to an organism and directs its formation (also called the immanence of God) cannot, prior to the development of consciousness and hence freedom, be distinguished from the scientific process of evolution. It is the encosmic Christ, the early stage of incarnation present in all creation.²³

The second great intellectual movement of the nineteenth century to influence DuBose's work was the philosophy of personalism, or personal idealism (a metaphysics that crafted a path between absolute idealism and materialism). Although taking many

21. DuBose describes the foundational role of Aristotle's philosophy in his own theology and teaching this way: "I began quite early, for example, to read with an advanced class Aristotle's Ethics – for both the Greek and the philosophy. Unconsciously Aristotle became the basis and starting point of all my thinking. I seemed to find in him the true root and starting point of all thought or knowledge of myself: Socrates' 'Know thyself' found in him, in the third generation, its scientific response, or at least the beginning of it. I began to apply his principles and follow his lines, and found that instruction built up on that foundation was not only more satisfactory to myself, but more intelligible and self-evident to the classes than upon any other system. But while I never ceased to live in my source, my teaching only started from that beginning and more and more became my own." *Turning Points in My Life*, 6.

22. DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, 17.

23. DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, 28.

24. Rufus Burrow, Jr., *Personalism: A Critical Introduction* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999), 1-11.

forms, the common claim among the different manifestations of personalism is the claim that rational spirit (or mind) is the supreme reality. From this perspective, reality is often seen as a “society of selves and persons with a Supreme Person (God) at its center.”²⁴ In early personalism, the terms *person* and *personality* are used interchangeably; we see both terms used by DuBose to describe a rational spirit having the qualities of self-consciousness and self-determination (freedom). The influence of personalism on the theology of DuBose will be examined further in later chapters, but its introduction here is necessary to explore DuBose’s understanding of incarnation.

With the emergence on the evolutionary scene of a rational spirit marked by what DuBose calls the “twin miracles” of consciousness and freedom, human personality – finite spirit, self, person – is born. Reason comes to itself in the world. God is now not only within creation as the ideal principle indistinguishable from our physical activities and form; God is now also outside of us, in a way that we can recognize as the other and, therefore, form a spiritual relationship of our free choosing.²⁵ This shift from an immanent relationship to a transcendent one, according to DuBose, makes possible a true incarnation formed by a personal relationship between God and humanity. This is the end for which humankind was created.

Natural Beings Created for a Spiritual End

If traditional Christology speaks of two natures (human and divine) in the one person of Christ, then an exploration of DuBose’s incarnational theology may well begin

25. DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, 28.

by asking the question, what does DuBose believe to be the nature of humanity? In keeping with his reliance on Aristotelian philosophy, DuBose defines the nature of a thing as that which it is destined to become. For most living beings, the completion of their purpose or destiny occurs through their own becoming – in other words, through the unfolding of the Logos immanent within their being. However, human beings differ from other things in that we are unable to complete our own becoming from within; instead, we require the addition of something from without to become that which we were created to be – children of God.²⁶ It is the potential for this parent-child relationship – and not its actuality – that resides in our nature, as DuBose explains in this way:

...neither in the Christianity of the New Testament nor in the facts of the Christian life can I find any more meaning in the so-called natural sonship of man than this, that man is constituted by his nature – not son of God, but – *to become* son of God. That is, it is his nature to enter, beyond his nature, and outside of himself, into an objective, transcendental, personal or spiritual relationship with God, of which will be born his sonship.²⁷

The emergence of human personality means that human beings are finite spirits, and our end is personal, spiritual union with God.²⁸

According to DuBose, humanity's awareness of infinity, eternity, completeness, and perfection – all characteristics not directly experienced in the finite world in which

26. DuBose, *The Gospel in the Gospels*, 48.

27. DuBose, *The Gospel According to Saint Paul*, 39-40.

28. While this destiny cannot be attained on our own, it is not contrary to our Nature but completes it, as DuBose explains: "It is our own highest nature – and that alone is the true supernatural – not to be completed by nature, nor be able of ourselves to fulfil the law of self-completion, but to find the completion at once of our nature and ourselves in highest union and association with God." DuBose, *The Gospel in the Gospels*, 79.

we live – bear witness to these things as our destiny. Our very consciousness of infinity in all these dimensions is “the potency and promise and prophecy of these things for us and in us.”²⁹ Our spiritual poverty, our inability to achieve our end in and of ourselves, only reinforces that we are created precisely to find them in God:

Blessed they who know their own insufficiency, their own poverty and weakness, sufficiently to feel their need of the powers yet to come, of the kingdom of God in their souls. And not only so; not only are they blessed who know their poverty and feel their need, but blessed is that poverty and that need in itself. That we are insufficient in ourselves for the holiness, the righteousness, the eternal life that are necessary to complete us; that only God in and with us can suffice for them; that without God we cannot compass the spirit or accomplish the law of our own perfection, only means that God has made us not for ourselves and our own finiteness, but for Himself and His infinity, and that we are violating ourselves and transgressing our law in falling short, or in being willing and satisfied to fall short, of that.³⁰

Our hunger for God does not arise unsummoned out of our own spiritual nature; instead, our longing is evoked by these prevenient lures of God which draw us heavenward.³¹

The grace of God does not act, however, only through such movements that quicken our desire for God. For if we are to reach the end for which we were created through the work of our own will, affections, reason, and activity (as the law of personality requires), then a human life lived in union with God must be revealed to us. This God accomplishes in the Incarnation of Jesus – the objective revelation of the Word made flesh. For DuBose, this is our ideal, purpose and end mirrored to us: “Humanity

29. Willlliam Porcher DuBose, *High Priesthood and Sacrifice: An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908), 18.

30. DuBose, *The Gospel in the Gospels*, 94-95.

31. DuBose, *The Soteriology of the New Testament* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1892), 166-167.

continues, and will always continue, to believe and to find itself in Jesus, because Jesus embodies and expresses to humanity the truth of itself; the truth, the beauty and the goodness of itself.”³² But objective revelation alone does not enable us to reach the spiritual height that is our destiny in God.

According to DuBose, Jesus is not merely the revelation of our end; he is also the means by which we reach our goal. DuBose explains it in the following way: “The Gospel from the beginning was not at all that Jesus most perfectly represented our common nature or illustrated our human life, but that He brought with Him something into our nature and life which was not there before, and raised them into something which was not themselves or their own, and to which they could attain only in and through Him.”³³ Incompleteness is a characteristic of universal humanity in its created form and, therefore, the Incarnation in DuBose’s theology is not predicated on the Fall but necessary for our spiritual transformation. When sin entered the story of humanity, however, the need for transformation became the need for redemption (which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter). Our sinful condition is made known to us as our truest selves are revealed to us in Christ.³⁴

32. DuBose, *The Gospel in the Gospels*, 17.

33. DuBose, *The Gospel in the Gospels*, 6.

34. DuBose, *The Soteriology of the New Testament*, 71. Without sin, our spiritual nature would still need to undergo transformation from an earthly humanity to a heavenly one, but according to DuBose the change would not be painful. “Change alone is not death, and birth does not necessarily involve death. It only does so when there is a positive opposition between that which has been and that which is to be, and then the becoming of the latter necessitates the un-becoming, undoing, or destruction of the former.” *The Soteriology of the New Testament*, 101-102.

Before exploring the incarnational theology of DuBose in more detail in the next section, it is important to note that the spiritual union between God and humankind that defines incarnation for DuBose fulfills not only the purpose of humanity but also the divine end for which God created the world. For inherent in God's nature is the manifestation of God as Love, which requires the possibility of a reciprocal exchange of affection and desire.³⁵ DuBose in the following passage from *Soteriology of the New Testament*:

The divine end, which God is so often represented as having had in view from eternity, because it is inherent in His very nature is the realization of Himself, not only as wisdom and power, not even as mere goodness, but as *Love*, in the exaltation of man as head of the creation into Himself in Jesus Christ. I say not merely as goodness, but as love, because God might have manifested Himself as goodness in a merely immanent relation to the universe of which there was no consciousness in the latter; but He could only manifest Himself as love through a transcendental and personal relation to beings who could know Him as such and love Him in return. Love is reciprocal affection and action, or can exist only where there is at least a possibility of reciprocity. We may be good to things; we properly love only persons. The love through which God incarnates Himself in, and so exalts us, is not only His love for us, but our love in return for Him. The divine love which glorifies and, so far as we are capable of it, deifies us, is a love of which we are not only the objects but the subjects.³⁶

Accordingly, DuBose understands the purpose of the particular and objective Incarnation of Christ to be a means of what is the ultimate divine end in God's creation – the “generic” incarnation of God in humanity and humanity in God. God's movement toward

35. DuBose writes: “...the fact and character of man's Salvation has its root and ground primarily in the very nature and character of God Himself. The definition of God involves the destiny of man. That in Himself God is Holiness, Righteousness, and Life, and that to us He is Love, Wisdom, and Power, contains within itself the whole story of Incarnation and redemption.” *The Soteriology of the New Testament*, 82-83.

36. DuBose, *The Soteriology of the New Testament*, 126-127.

humanity in the Incarnation has always been a thought in the mind of God; it is on humanity's responding movement toward God that DuBose places most of his attention.

The Word Made Flesh and Humanity Made Holy

Christology is, at its root, the union of God and humankind. According to DuBose, unless humanity is in some sense of "like nature," there can be no communion or transcendent relationship. It is the spiritual nature of both God and humanity that forms the bridge for not only the particular Incarnation in Jesus Christ, but also the "generic" incarnation of all humanity. It is the self or personality – finite in humanity and infinite in God – through which each can be known to the other:

... we know ourselves only under the categories of thought, feeling, and will or action; our "self," or personality, is a compound and unity of intelligence, affection, and volition and action. Now what is God? He is infinite or omniscient intelligence, or Wisdom; He is infinite or perfect affection, or Love; He is infinite or omnipotent activity, or Righteousness and Goodness. Is it not true that God is the Infinite of what we are, and that we are the finite of what God is? The first word of religion is the recognition of the fact that we are in the image of God. To know God at all we have to know ourselves; to know ourselves unto perfection, we have to know God. To be ourselves unto perfection, we have to be what God is.³⁷

The personal, spiritual fellowship between God and humanity is the means by which God becomes our parent and we become God's children; it is God fulfilling Godself in humanity, and humanity completing itself in God; it is the correspondence of nature in spirit, truth, and love.³⁸

37. DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, 142-143.

38. DuBose, *The Ecumenical Councils* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897), 335.

Although the completion of humankind is communion with God, this spiritual completeness is not within the grasp of humankind on its own. Thus, the Incarnation in Jesus Christ was, from the beginning, to be the means for the transformation of our own spirits to their perfection in God. But how does DuBose understand the Incarnation in terms of the Chalcedonian language? For DuBose, the nature of a being is its mode of action, its personality.³⁹ To say that the Logos *became* a human being (and did not *assume* a human being) means that its mode of being, or its nature, became that of a human – without omniscience or omnipotence, but with all the reason, affections, freedom, and activity of a human being. When the human personality in the resurrected Christ is one with God, Jesus’ humanity is the co-equal partner of his divinity. The Divine Logos, the immanently efficient and final cause of all natural creation, has become fully incarnate as the efficient and final cause of humanity’s attainment of its final end in God.⁴⁰

The humanity of Jesus Christ began with the same potential for divinity as that of all human beings; his humanity became righteous only through exercising his freedom of selfhood to choose over and over again faith and obedience over sin.⁴¹ For unless his

39. DuBose, *The Soteriology of the New Testament*, 138.

40. DuBose, *Soteriology of the New Testament*, 138-140. DuBose explains further: “When the Church insists upon the ‘One Person in two natures,’ by one person it means one personal *subject*. The *αὐτός* or *He* in Him was one and that one, divine; Jesus Christ was not the Logos *in* a man, which would be the union of two persons; but the Logos *as* a man, or as man, one person in two natures.” *The Soteriology of the New Testament*, 140. It is precisely Christ’s identity as the Logos in human mode that prevents DuBose’s incarnational theology from being a form of adoptionism. The Logos *as* a man begins the incarnational process, one that is only complete through a spiritual union of humanity and divinity – a unity of will, reason, and affections.

41. In keeping with DuBose’s use of Aristotelian philosophy as a building block

personality retained the property of self-determination, his humanity would not have been identical to our humanity, and his pathway to completion in God could not have become our pathway as well.⁴² DuBose writes the following:

Human nature and human life were not in and of themselves sinless or holy in Jesus Christ. They were sinless or holy in Him, but they were made so by his act in them. And the gist and essence of his act which made them so consisted in the fact that it was an act performed not in the nature or in himself but wholly and perfectly in God. He was himself the supreme demonstration and manifestation of the fact that man attains or becomes himself not by nature of by self but by God. And yet, in fulfilling God he fulfills himself and in fulfilling himself he fulfills his nature.⁴³

Jesus is humanity becoming the child of God through its own acts and choice. If Jesus were not the Divine Logos in the mode of his human personality, sinlessness would have been as impossible for his humanity, as it is for our own. For DuBose, the human personality in Jesus must have been saddled with the same propensity to sin as our own; and yet as Divine Logos, sinning would have been impossible. As difficult as it is to hold

of his own theology, he argues that virtue is a personal quality, not a natural one. Therefore, it must develop through the self-conscious freedom of our personality: “No man is virtuous by nature, for the simple reason that virtue is not a natural but a personal quality. It is not virtue except in so far as it has come through oneself, consciously, voluntarily, and of choice. Yet virtue is the most natural thing in the world, and vice the most unnatural. Virtue is the fulfilment of our nature, – but it is *our* fulfilment of it, and it does not really exist prior to our act and activity in its production. Nature constitutes us – not virtuous, but to become so, to make ourselves so. And it constitutes us so by making us persons, by endowing us with reason to know and will to act of ourselves.” *The Gospel in the Gospels*, 44.

42. “We cannot remain persons, unless our personality, in its highest activities and life, retain its distinctive property of self-determination of freedom. A Purely God-determined life could not be our life. Jesus Christ was not man if he had not a human will and human freedom.” DuBose, *The Gospel According to Saint Paul*, 33.

43. DuBose, *High Priesthood and Sacrifice*, 148.

these two assertions together, for DuBose, it is imperative; otherwise, the humanity redeemed and perfected in Jesus Christ would not be our humanity.

The manifestation of divinity in Jesus Christ is precisely and only through his perfected personality, his sinlessness. Thus, Jesus Christ revealed a new humanity transformed and deified, a humanity in perfect unity with God. DuBose argues that any manifestation of divinity other than that of a human-divine personality would jeopardize a true incarnation:

When even with hostile intent criticism emphasizes the very and entire humanness of the Jesus of the synoptics, not merely of his body and its natural affections but also of his mind and consciousness, and of his will and character and life – when it represents his virtue as consisting, like ours, of a free human will and a sweet human reasonableness, and even his godliness as being, like ours, the gift to him of the divine grace through his human faith – let us remember that these things cannot be too much emphasized, that by how much he lacked any part of them he fell short of being a man, and his humanity of being a real and a complete incarnation. Jesus Christ wholly revealed God in that he was and not otherwise as he was the divine revelation of the whole nature, life, and destiny of man. As such he is the divine and the whole, as well of every man as of all humanity.⁴⁴

The difference between the portrayal of Jesus in the letters of Paul and the synoptic gospels and the portrayal of Jesus in the Gospel of John results from approaching the divine-human personality in Jesus from two different sides; together these distinct representations of Jesus reveal the reciprocity involved in the transcendent relationship between God and humanity. In the works of Paul and the synoptic gospels, with their emphasis on the humanity of Jesus, we see an illustration of humanity realizing itself in God, crafting itself through temptations and sufferings into the prototype of divine sonship (or childhood). In the emphasis on Jesus' divinity found in the Gospel of John,

44. DuBose, *Ecumenical Councils*, 16.

we see the movement of God toward humanity, the fulfilment of God in humanity. The two presentations of Jesus – that of humanity becoming God and God becoming human – are required to express the full truth of the Incarnation, with the latter as the cause of the former.⁴⁵

DuBose argues that the actual process through which Jesus' humanity was deified is the same as that for humanity in general – the Holy Spirit at work in us, the means of our appropriation of God's grace in our human nature:

The Life that was manifested – however unqualifiedly it was the Life that was with God, and that was God – was, nevertheless, manifested wholly as our life: the Godhead was wholly *within* the humanity. There was nothing of knowledge, of power, or of divinity, visible or present in our Lord's humanity, as such, that was not humanly communicated to it, that was not ascribed to the action of the Holy Ghost in Him as it is the function of the Holy Ghost to act in humanity. If the Spirit of God operated more powerfully, even perfectly, in Him, it was precisely in the ratio in which, humanly, He cooperated most perfectly with the Holy Ghost. This is not only plain matter of record, but it is vital to the sense in which the Divine Life, in Him, became our life. There is a sense in which, and a process by which humanity, potentially divine in itself, can become actually divine by itself. The process is by faith, through which reciprocally Deity unites itself with humanity, and humanity unites itself with Deity. Jesus Christ is the revelation, the realization, on both sides, of that divine-human process.⁴⁶

Grace – as the work of the Holy Spirit – never acts on or in us by force, or it would not be grace. Instead, grace acts through cooperation with human faith, preserving the personhood of humanity and our transformation through our own actions.⁴⁷ Therefore, as Jesus responded to trials and temptations over his lifetime (none more than the cross), his humanity became divine over time – through his human knowledge, freedom, and

45. DuBose, *Ecumenical Councils*, 14-18.

46. DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, 186.

47. DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, 147.

action.⁴⁸ It is a gradual, progressive incarnation.⁴⁹ The resurrection reveals his ultimate victory over sin, as well as the truth that the deification of humanity is the pathway to perfect fellowship with God. All of this is possible because Jesus is both the “perfect divine grace” and the “perfect human faith and obedience” in one person.⁵⁰

Christ Our Salvation

Since the law of personality applies to humankind as finite spirits, we must reach the end for which we were created through our own will, reason, and affections – through our desires, choices, and actions. Yet how are we to make ourselves if we do not know the goal of our development? Our purpose must be revealed to us objectively for us to appropriate that truth subjectively, realizing that end in ourselves. Therefore, even for humanity in an unfallen state, the Incarnation is a necessary part of the evolution of the world. According to DuBose, because both divine revelation (through the Word) and

48. In DuBose’s theology, the cross is an indispensable element in the journey to spiritual humanity: “the cross of Christ will never cease to be the symbol as it is the only possible principle of the highest human life and character. There is but one way either to the Godhead or to the truest manhood – the VIA CRUCIS; and none can come either to the Father or to real selfhood and personality but by it.” *The Ecumenical Councils*, 38.

49. According to DuBose, incarnation is an ongoing process on a universal level. As well: “...let us remember that the Christ is still in process: Jesus is coming still, and yet to come. The Body of His incarnation was not alone His flesh, but all flesh. Jesus was not only Man, but all men.” *The Reason of Life*, 44. The progressive incarnation in Jesus writ large in the progressive incarnation of all humanity may, in part, underlie DuBose’s understanding of the interpretation of scripture over time: “For each time must have its own living interpretation, since the interpretation cannot but be, in half measure at least, relative to the time. If the divine part in it is fixed, the human is progressive and changing just in so far as it is living. *High Priesthood and Sacrifice*, 2.

50. DuBose, *The Ecumenical Councils*, 310.

human appropriation (through the Holy Spirit) are transcendent acts, we have to know these things outside ourselves before we can make them our own:

Life thus becomes to us, not merely an immanent fact, but a transcendent act on our part. It is something from without and above us which we must know in order to attain, and attain in order to truly know. That is to say, we need to know it as something without and beyond us before we can know it as something from without from within us. God's part is (1) by His Word, and (2) by His Spirit; our part is (1) faith in response to the Word, and (2) works or life in obedience to and fulfilment of the Spirit.

It is not too much to say that it is not possible to know God except in Trinity, – not a trinity of speculative and metaphysical thought, but the actual and practical Trinity, in which God has made Himself knowable and known to us – without us by His Word, and within us through His Spirit.⁵¹

For in Jesus Christ we see both the truth of ourselves (that we can only find our true selves in God) and God's truth to us (that God wishes to give us God's very self) – a revelation of who we are in God and the means by which we reach that end. The gospel is the revelation of God fulfilling Godself in humanity and humanity realizing itself in God; our salvation is our righteousness that the Incarnation makes possible.

Although the Incarnation was a thought in the mind of God before creation came into being, when humanity used its freedom in ways that took it far from the pathway to spiritual fellowship with God, the Incarnation became not only our salvation but also our redemption. In God's gift to us of Jesus, God has provided a means for each person to become holy and to participate in God's own life and spirit, thereby becoming children of God.⁵² Through our renunciation of sin and our faith in Jesus as the reconciliation of humanity to God, Jesus' holiness, righteousness, and life is imputed to us as our own,

51. DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, 58-59.

52. DuBose, *The Gospel in the Gospels*, 47-48.

thereby allowing God to work in us by grace.⁵³ DuBose describes it in the following way: “This then is the status of the sinner with God: he is not holy in fact, but he is holy in faith; and his holiness in faith is God’s effectual way of making him holy in fact. He is one with God, or at one with God, because all that as yet he infinitely is not, he wholly believes and loves and means; and all that he so means he is in principle, and will be in effect.”⁵⁴ This grace at work in us to achieve our righteousness does not absolve us of doing the work ourselves, for the work of God and humanity is not competitive; God does all the work for our cleansing from sin, and we also do all the work necessary to achieve a spirit and holiness like that of God.⁵⁵

The necessity of our cooperation with the Holy Spirit in the realization of our sanctification results in the following elements in DuBose’s theology. First, the kingdom of God is not one in which the unlimited love and mercy of God is merely shown *to* us,

53. In DuBose’s incarnational theology, the righteousness of Christ is both imputed and imparted to us: “The fact that on God’s part righteousness is *given* first objectively in Christ, and then subjectively in us in Christ, that as Christ’s righteousness it is imputed before it is imparted as our own to us; the fact that on our part it is first appropriated by us in faith, and so, by consequence only and afterwards made our own in fact – this does not make it two different righteousnesses, but only one, which is ours in two different ways, *i.e.* first in faith only and then through this faith in fact also.” *The Soteriology of the New Testament*, 89.

54. DuBose, *High Priesthood and Sacrifice*, 38.

55. For DuBose, what is true of Jesus’ humanity and its salvation is true also of the salvation of all humanity; therefore, we can find in the following statement the truth of our cooperation with God’s grace: “All these [acts of sanctification] are acts, or rather this in all its points of view and forms of expression is an act, at once wholly divine and wholly human. It is not that God performs one part and man another in it, but each performs the whole ... The Incarnation is at no point ever, only a co-operation or co-partnership. God is everywhere all in all, and yet always to the personal fulfilment and never the extinction of ourselves.” *High Priesthood and Sacrifice*, 175.

but one in which the unlimited love and mercy of God is exercised *through* us. For we possess the attributes of God only as we use them in our lives. DuBose elaborates in the following passage:

The whole tenor of our Lord's teaching and example is to the effect that the *res* or matter of our salvation is not in what God is to us or does for us, but is the result of that upon and in ourselves. It is not the being loved but the loving with a divine love that is our salvation. It is not the receiving but the showing mercy, not our being forgiven but our forgiving, that Jesus Christ is concerned about, not because God is in want of, in the sense of lacking, what we are or can so, but because He knows that that alone is what we want or lack. We do not take sufficient account of the inseparable condition attached to all God's gifts of grace. We can receive freely only what we give freely, and the blessing contained and intended in the gift is to be found by us not in the freely receiving but in the freely using and giving.⁵⁶

The holiness of God is realized only through the love, service, and self-sacrifice that we show to the world.

Second, the flesh is not only the source of any sin that separates us from God; it is also the source of our salvation, since we create ourselves through our will, choices, and actions.⁵⁷ This means that we create our holiness, our unity with Christ, by overcoming the trials and tribulations of life – a process in which sorrow and suffering (all the crucifixions of our lives) are inevitable.⁵⁸ For DuBose is clear in his belief that the difference between saints and sinners is not in the external conditions we face, but in our

56. DuBose, *The Gospel in the Gospels*, 68.

57. DuBose, *The Gospel in the Gospels*, 97.

58. DuBose understands the cross as the ultimate sorrow that lifts us to God: "It is the cross that raiseth us; the pain of the world is the lever by which God lifts us to himself. The cross that exalted Jesus the Son of God to the right hand of the Father is the Christian assurance that God and love are at the heart of all natural so-called evil; that there is no evil but sin, whose essence is ignorance and unbelief of God and love." *The Ecumenical Councils*, 85.

response to those conditions.⁵⁹ Third, because God works in the world either immanently through the Logos residing in all of creation or transcendentally in cooperation with humankind, we are the current incarnation in the world – not merely incarnated, but also incarnating the world through the Holy Spirit.⁶⁰ Participation in God’s Spirit means participation also in the kingdom of God on earth.

Finally, throughout the whole of DuBose’s theology is an implicit claim that we must now make explicit: Full communion with God is nothing less than the deification of humanity; union with God is both achieved and expressed by the perfection of human life, God fulfilling Godself in humanity and humanity realizing itself in God. The divine childhood (or sonship, in the male-dominated language of DuBose and the New Testament) is nothing less than the human spirit made divine – not in the physical attributes of the infinite Spirit, but in its nature, as DuBose writes in *The Reason of Life*:

The Only-begotten is the realization and revelation of the end of evolution in the deification of humanity. The crowning glory of Jesus Christ was not that which

59. DuBose writes the following: “We are to remember that we overcome the world, we save ourselves by as well as from the world, only by, in the right sense, serving and giving up ourselves for it to the very limit of life and extreme of death.” Although this reveals the importance of the flesh in our salvation, the world is ultimately seen as something to be overcome in DuBose’s soteriology. *High Priesthood and Sacrifice*, 222.

60. DuBose explains that this is our part in the economy of the world to manifest God at work: “We are now the incarnation, not only incarnated but incarnating; we are the atonement, atoned and atoning. What is doing upon earth of peacemaking, we are the doers of it. It is the work distinctively not of the Father nor of the Son, but of the Spirit. The love of the Father is complete, the grace of the Son is finished. Only the task of the Holy Ghost remains to be accomplished. ... We say that this is the dispensation or the economy of the world. Whatever be the place or the part of the Holy Ghost in the divine nature, as the Spirit of Father and of Son, in the world of men the Holy Ghost has no other place or part, He cannot otherwise manifest Himself than in and as the spirit of men. In the spiritual half at least of God’s creation, only that is done which we also do, only that is accomplished or attained which is accomplished or attained through us.” *The Gospel in the Gospel*, 115-116.

He had with the Father before the world was; nor yet that which He brought with Him into the world when He came forth from the Father; it was that which He wrought in the world, the act and achievement by which He made humanity divine.⁶¹

He expresses this human potential for divinity even more explicitly in *High Priesthood and Sacrifice*: “I see in Jesus Christ a capacity in my nature as spirit to become as perfect as God is perfect. ... The infinite and eternal, the perfect and complete, are my natural inheritance.”⁶² The recognition that the perfection we see in the humanity of Jesus Christ is to become our own arouses in us not only a holy ambition, but also an authentic humility; for although the divinity is wrought by our own human nature, the glory will belong to Christ without whom our deification cannot take place.⁶³

In this deification we see the journey of the Logos come full circle. The Reason in God immanent in creation as the Divine Logos fulfills its purpose as it returns to God in the union of humanity with God. The highest calling of humankind is not merely righteousness as right action toward things or others; but, in the union with God, a deep correspondence with the purpose of the universe, with the Supreme Personality.⁶⁴ This

61. DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, 53-54.

62. DuBose, *High Priesthood and Sacrifice*, 17.

63. DuBose, *The Gospel According to Saint Paul*, 109-110. We can only become Holy as God is holy by union with God, which takes place first for us in Christ before it becomes real in ourselves. He writes: “To inherit the divine nature as our own natural destination, to become like God by becoming in union with Him what God is, that is the only possible meaning and reason and purpose of religion.” *High Priesthood and Sacrifice*, 151.

64. John S. Marshall writes of this in his summary of DuBose’s theology, *The Word Was Made Flesh*: “We are told that God has ‘predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself’ [Ephesians 1:5]. That means that the life which came to us from God, the Father, will finally return to God in the form of our completed sonship.” John S. Marshall, *The Word Was Made Flesh: The Theology of William*

personalistic theology of William Porcher DuBose was by no means the premiere, let alone the only, incarnational theology in the Episcopal Church of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We now turn to the more orthodox theology of Francis Joseph Hall and his crusade against Kenoticism.

Porcher DuBose (Sewanee, TN: The University Press at the University of the South, 1949), 26-27.

Chapter Two

The Traditional Christology of Francis J. Hall

While a conversion experience during his years at the Citadel precipitated DuBose's career in ministry, Francis Joseph Hall was shaped by the legacy of his grandfather's priesthood – an experience that, if not as dramatic as the conversion experience of DuBose, placed a claim on his life every bit as binding. As a young Congregationalist schoolteacher in Ashtabula, Ohio, John Hall (1788-1869) – the grandfather of Francis Hall – lived with Joseph Badger, a Presbyterian minister. When reading materials from New York City arrived in the Western Reserve, Badger enlisted Hall's assistance in determining their appropriateness for the community. Among the books, pamphlets, and Bibles was a copy of *The Book of Common Prayer* that the young Hall read eagerly; it became for him the authority on matters of the Church. He soon felt called to pursue holy orders in the Episcopal Church. A subsequent conversation with the rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Ashtabula launched him on a ministerial trajectory that would determine the rest of his life.¹

In a brief biographical sketch of his grandfather, Francis J. Hall describes John Hall as “high church” years before the Oxford Movement brought such sensibilities into fashion. Over time the Sacraments of the Church became the center of John Hall's faith and ministry. Francis credits his grandfather with taking the tradition of a weekly Eucharist to Nashotah in 1842. On Easter 1843, John Hall wrote the following third-

1. Francis J. Hall, “The Life of the Rev. John Hall” (unpublished manuscript), *Project Canterbury*, accessed November 23, 2020, accessed November 23, 2020, <http://anglicanhistory.org/usa/fjhall/johnhall.html>.

person statement in the parish register of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Ashtabula: "He has determined (God willing) henceforward to observe in the Church all the feasts and fasts of the Church, and to administer the Holy Communion every Lord's Day, and to receive no more pew rents."²

When Francis was born on December 24, 1857, John Hall dedicated his grandson to the priesthood. Francis's family lived in his grandparents' home; each day the elderly priest would take the young Hall onto his lap and explain the biblical passages of Morning and Evening Prayer to him. It is to this experience that Francis Hall attributes his own views of scripture:

To him the Bible was the Church's book, and to be interpreted as concerned throughout with Jesus Christ and His Church. He knew nothing, of course, about modern criticism; but he fixed in my childish mind a conception of the Old Testament which has saved me wholly from anxiety concerning the "results" of biblical criticism. Important parts of these "results" I have accepted, but this has not required me to modify my conception of biblical inspiration or to lower my recognition of the divine authority of the Bible in the least. And my experience under him convinces me that, when the Bible is taught to the young as God's collection of memorials of the checkered growth of true religion, and of the gradual revelation of Jesus Christ and His Church, the teaching will never need correction – will never be outgrown.³

Francis's family moved to Chicago in 1867, but his grandfather's piety and elevated view of both the Church and Holy Scripture never left him.

2. Francis J. Hall, *Life of the Rev. John Hall*. Francis Hall also recounts this story of a visiting clergyman who accused his grandfather of being a "Puseyite": "Inquiring what that meant, [my grandfather] procured the *Tracts for the Times*. When he next met his visitor he said to him, 'You are mistaken. Dr. Pusey is a Hallite. I have held his principles throughout my ministry.' He, of course, knew nothing of the ceremonial developments of later time. He would not solemnize a marriage when either party was unbaptized; and he invariably published the Banns, and when we could persuade the parties, married them before the Congregation in the Sunday Morning Service."

3. Francis J. Hall, *Life of the Rev. John Hall*.

Francis Hall earned a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts from Racine College.⁴ He studied for ordination at both General Theological Seminary and Western Theological Seminary before being ordained to the diaconate on July 1, 1885 and to the priesthood on February 21, 1886. Hall spent most of his career as a priest teaching dogmatic theology at the two seminaries that had formed him so deeply – serving on the faculty of Western Theological Seminary from 1886 to 1913 and of General Theological Seminary from 1913 until his retirement in 1928.⁵ Throughout his career he remained active in the church on diocesan and national levels, serving for various periods of time in the following roles: Register of the Diocese of Chicago (1894 to 1913), Secretary of the Diocesan Standing Committee, Examining Chaplain, President of the Western Theological Seminary Alumni Association (1898-1899), and organizing member of the first World Conference on Faith and Order at Lausanne, Switzerland (1927).⁶

Hall published many theological works during his lifetime, the following books being among the best-known: *Theological Outlines* (three volumes, the first editions of which were published between 1892 and 1895), *The Kenotic Theory* (1898), *Dogmatic Theology* (ten volumes, published between 1907 and 1922), *Christianity and Modernism*

4. Don S. Armentrout and Robert Boak Slocum, eds., *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church: A User-Friendly Guide for Episcopalians* (New York: Church Publishing, 2000), 234.

5. “Dr. Francis J. Hall, Theologian, Dies.” *New York Times*, March 13, 1932, accessed March 8, 2021, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1932/03/13/100694367.pdf?pdf_redirec t=true&ip=0.

6. Armentrout and Slocum, 234; “Dr. Francis J. Hall, Theologian Dies,” *New York Times*.

(1924), *Moral Theology* (1924), and *Christian Union in Ecumenical Light* (1930). Aside from his career as a professor and published theologian, Hall is perhaps most widely known for his role as theological counsel for the Episcopal Church in the heresy trial of Algernon Sidney Crapsey in 1906.⁷ These and his many other accomplishments are made all the more remarkable by his significant deafness.⁸

Regarding his personal life, Francis J. Hall married his cousin, Prudence A. Griswold, in 1886. They had three children, one son and two daughters – all of whom survived Hall’s death in 1932. Beginning in the early years of the 20th century, the Hall family spent summers at the lake town of Onekama, Michigan. In 1912 a small Episcopal summer chapel, St. John’s by-the-Lake, was constructed on land purchased by Hall.⁹ He pastored the chapel each summer from its construction until a few years before his death. Given his authentic piety, his love of prayer, and the centrality of the Sacraments in his faith, it is not surprising that Hall would undertake the establishment of an Episcopal chapel in the place where he vacationed regularly. One student described Hall’s devotion to God through prayer and worship in the following way:

Doctor Hall was interested in no abstruse subject for its own sake, nor was he primarily interested in scholarship; he was not first a teacher, nor even a defender

7. Algernon Sidney Crapsey was accused and convicted of holding and expounding beliefs not in accord with traditional Christian doctrine, especially the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds – the virgin birth, the deity of Jesus, and the second coming of Christ. Stephen Todd Neese, “Algernon Sidney Crapsey and the Move for Presentment,” *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 70, no.3 (Sept 2001): 329, 345.

8. Gregory Mabry, “An Appreciation of Francis Joseph Hall, Priest and Doctor,” *American Church Monthly* 31: 333-337, found on the Project Canterbury website, accessed November 23, 2020, <http://anglicanhistory.org/usa/fjhall/mabry.html>.

9. “St. John’s by-the-Lake,” *Visit Manistee County Michigan*, accessed November 23, 2020, <https://www.visitmanisteecounty.com/web-2-0-directory/st-johns-by-the-lake/>.

of the Faith. He was interested in and loved all these things because he was first, last, and all the time a great lover of God. ... One morning, after he had vested for Mass, before we had left the sacristy for the altar, I saw him turning the pages of a notebook as he prayed. He later showed that book to me. In it were the names of numerous persons, living and departed, for whom he was about to offer the Holy Sacrifice. From him I gained my first idea of ordered intercessory prayer and Mass intentions. He prayed ceaselessly, and no one valued or used sacramental grace with more frequency, regularity, and knowledge of its power. No one knew better the atoning power of Christ's Sacrifice presented in the Mass. He loved God and, I believe, lived his life in God's Presence. ... A consuming love for God – a love that consumed self – was the key to Doctor Hall's life.¹⁰

This all-consuming love for God was fueled, for Hall, by scripture and the tradition of the Church – a pathway to devotion which permeated his theology.

Hall's conservative approach to theology, with its prioritizing of tradition over critical inquiry, is a response to theological modernism. While Hall believes theology to be a progressive science (our theological understanding expanding over time in response to academic scholarship), he also holds that the critical study of theology and scripture should play second fiddle to the teaching of the early Church. In *The Incarnation*, he writes the following:

Theology is a progressive science – not less so because, like other sciences, it accepts a limited number of “dogmas” as constituting established “results”; – and a modern theological treatise must reckon with advancing critical inquiry, and with wider scientific knowledge, so far as they pertain to its own subject-matter. But in a constructive exposition of this kind the progressive – that is the critical and apologetical – aspects of its subject-matter must be relegated to a secondary position. This does not mean that their importance may be ignored, and that we need not reckon with the demand for a reconstruction of positive theology, such as will bring it into line with modern critical knowledge and mental perspectives. It means simply that there must be a division of labor, and that the discussion of modern problems must be kept within severe limits.¹¹

10. Mabry, “An Appreciation of Francis Joseph Hall, Priest and Doctor.”

11. Francis J. Hall, *The Incarnation* (New York: Longman's, Green, and Company, 1915), 3.

For Hall, the transfer of deference from ecclesiastical authority to scholarship, the insistence that all history be understood in evolutionary terms (especially in terms of the principle of continuity), the requirement that scholars return to early Church sources unfettered by ecclesiastical definitions (not surprising since many moderns, Hall claims, assume that Greek terms have to be used according to their original meanings instead of those assigned by the Church), the demand that Jesus Christ be portrayed as fully human in all respects (including human experience, described in terms consistent with modern psychology), and the impulse to view Christ's work in purely ethical terms (with the resulting loss of metaphysical concerns) are the characteristics of a modernism in which orthodoxy is cast aside.¹²

Hall grounds his own theological explorations in catholic dogma, with its hard-to-explain juxtapositions and Greek metaphysical terms, and in the apostolic experience from which it springs (an experience that lives on even today in believers throughout the world).

This standpoint does not preclude attempts to translate ecumenical definitions into terms more intelligible to modern minds, nor does it prejudice fresh examinations of the data which these definitions were designed to interpret. Speaking in scientific parlance, it means that the definitions referred to, when taken in their original or historic sense, are accepted as registering *results* which theological science can safely assume to be established – results which have borne the test of manifold experience and investigation, and which are not believed to be in danger of overthrow by fresh consideration. In brief, they constitute the working hypotheses of catholic Christology.¹³

12. Hall, *The Incarnation*, 1-10.

13. Hall, *The Incarnation*, 15-18.

For Hall, the creedal definitions born out of the apostolic experience of early Christians is the theological equivalent of the direct, unassailable data obtained by modern scientific disciplines such as biology, chemistry, or physics. Our continued experience of the risen Christ (and the new life he brings) is the ongoing verification of these results; therefore, Christian theology cannot be rightly practiced outside of this continued relationship with Christ.

A Chalcedonian Christology

Having examined Hall's commitment to apostolic experience and the creedal language of the early Church, we turn to his theology of the Incarnation proper. Hall argues that the Incarnation serves two divine aims: 1) the revelation of God and God's purposes, and 2) the redemption of a sinful world.¹⁴ This emphasis on atonement does not mean that the union of God with humanity in the person of Christ brought no other benefits to creation;¹⁵ to the contrary, while restoring humankind to the state of grace it enjoyed before the advent of sin, the Incarnation is also the means by which humanity is enabled to move closer to the goal for which it was created – that of divine likeness and

14. Francis J. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory: Considered with Particular Reference to Its Anglican Form and Arguments* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898), 34-36.

15. "The immediate purpose for which the Son of God became incarnate – the purpose which receives primary emphasis in the New Testament – is the salvation of men from sin and death and from the devil. It is this purpose which had to be fulfilled as the *sine qua non* of any further purpose, and which now, as well as then, needs to be emphasized in proclaiming the Gospel to our sinful race. Purgation is the very formidable prerequisite of the wider and higher blessings which the Incarnation brings to men." Hall, *The Incarnation*, 81.

communion with God.¹⁶ Hall does not wish to deny this role that the Incarnation plays in the ongoing creation of the world, but neither does he wish to portray the cosmic need for the Incarnation as merely a slow-down in the world's evolution on the way to its fulfillment:

Sin is more than a brake upon progress. It is a violation of the moral order, which can only be remedied by expiation. It is a disease which can only be eradicated by the surgery of death – unendurable by the natural man. By the Incarnation, God came to the rescue, fashioning and proving a morally perfect manhood, in which He made the required satisfaction for sin and overcame the fatal power of death. And the manhood in which He thus overcame the consequences of sin becomes not only our place of effectual propitiation, but the sustaining *virus* which changes death from a fatal operation to successful surgery.¹⁷

For Hall, the Incarnation is nothing less than a rescue mission, one that restores us to a state of grace *and* supplies a “superhuman factor” (“virus”) needed to complete our evolution.¹⁸ Thus, although DuBose employs a less traditional vocabulary (largely due to the Aristotelian influence evident in his theology), both theologians understand the Incarnation to be the corrective required for the fulfillment of creaturely evolution. However, Hall stresses the infinite nature of Christ as that which provides the redemptive power necessary for our salvation; therefore, he refuses to let the transcendent power of God be emptied from any part of Christ's earthly life, even from the cross.¹⁹

16. “What could be more fitting, therefore, than that the Son should make our nature His own, and by this condescension should meet the upward movement of creaturely evolution and bring it to its eternally intended consummation by making Himself the centre and quickening principle of all.” Hall, *The Incarnation*, 85.

17. Francis J. Hall, *Theological Outlines*, rev. by Frank Hudson Hallock (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2004) 163.

18. Hall, *Theological Outlines*, 162.

19. “It is one of the commonplaces of Catholic theology that the infinite nature of

Hall uses traditional, Chalcedonian Christology to paint a portrait of Christ that safeguards the union of the divine and human natures and the attributes of God, without loss to either side of the equation. Hall recognizes that modern theologians often assume the language of creedal Christianity without doing the mental translation needed to preserve its original meaning; the consequence is that Chalcedonian terminology is viewed either as belonging to a dying Greek metaphysic or as synonymous with contemporary psychological definitions. When this occurs, Hall argues, theologians are usually left with two choices: jettison Christianity altogether (an intellectual trend which was on the rise in the nineteenth century) *or* adopt personality and consciousness as the site of human/divine unity (resulting in a co-mixture of human and divine natures instead of two separate natures, each performing that which is proper to it in communion with the other).²⁰ Hall offers a third way forward, the way of orthodox Christianity.

According to Hall, the place many modernists stray off course, when expounding the Chalcedonian Christology of two natures in one person, is in the attempt to give the term “person” positive content and in beginning this attempt from the direction of Christ’s earthly life. Instead of “conceiving of personality as a comprehensive symbol for

the Person Who offered Himself is what gives to the Sacrifice its infinite value and efficacy.... The Sacrifice has value for all men, all places, and all times. And it is certainly not too much to say that such considerations are incongruous with the idea that, when He offered Himself upon the Cross, He was bereft of those Divine attributes which signify the world-wide power of His Person and Its capacity for efficacious contact with all conditions and all times.” Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 53.

20. Hall contends that the seeds of this unorthodox Christology are to be found in the break with ecclesiastical authority that occurred at the Reformation, as well as in Martin Luther’s Christology which, according to Hall, amounted to an infusion of divine qualities in the human nature Jesus. *The Incarnation*, 62-64.

the totality of a rational and self-determining individual's psychical functioning," he states,

Catholic theology begins at the other end. Acknowledging that it is through apostolic experience of Christ's earthly life and conversation that the Church learned what she knows of His Person, the ancients made the conclusion thus reached – that Christ is the eternal Son of God – the starting point and determinative premise of their final and abiding interpretation of apostolic experience. They came to distinguish person ... from nature ... and to denote by that term the ego or self ... of Christ, as distinguished, although not as separable, from His volitional, emotional and intellectual functioning. That this is so can be seen from two of their frequently expressed beliefs: – that the Person of Christ is divine; and that this one Person possesses two distinct wills and two natural energies. It is obvious that if the Person of Christ is described as one and divine, while his wills are said to be two – divine and human – the will is not in such terminology reckoned as part of personality, even though it has to be acknowledged that the ancients never imagined such a thing as a Person who does not possess a will.²¹

In Chalcedonian Christology, the term 'person' is devoid of content. It is of the nature that will, consciousness, intelligence, and emotion are predicated (things that we might today think of as constituting personality); the person of Christ is the locus of the two natures, the site of the hypostatic union. Because this Self is separate from the phenomenon of consciousness, Hall writes, it escapes our awareness and our understanding.²² Any attempt to replace the Chalcedonian 'person' with a modern understanding of personality or consciousness or psychological functioning will result in a human consciousness with a mixture of divine and human attributes and, therefore, in a person who is neither fully human nor fully divine.

21. Hall, *The Incarnation*, 102-103.

22. Hall, *The Incarnation*, 102-103.

The Self or Subject of Christ is the Logos, the single center of two modes of functioning (natures) – the human and the divine. Because the two modes function differently, each does so in ways proper to its own nature without disrupting the integrity of the other.²³ Therefore, it makes no sense to claim that the human nature of Christ was omniscient, or to theorize that the divine nature must divest itself of omniscience before becoming one with Christ's human nature; for omniscience is not proper to the functioning of human nature, nor ignorance on the part of the divine. This same non-competitive relationship between natures holds for omnipresence and omnipotence.

That the two natures in Christ function non-competitively does not mean, however, that the human nature in Christ is unaffected by the divine. The inspiration of the human mind was indeed that of the divine (working from within his person through the Second Person of the Trinity and working from without through the Holy Spirit), but as explained above this inspiration did not take the form of the communication of divine attributes such that human ones are overshadowed. Following Thomas Aquinas, Hall held that grace perfects and does not destroy nature, including human nature. Instead, the abilities of the human mind in Christ were heightened, as was the purpose for which they were used, allowing Christ to live a perfectly obedient life at each developmental stage through which he passed.²⁴ According to Hall, this sanctification of his humanity through its union with his divinity is precisely the means of our salvation:

Because in Christ God bore the cost of human obedience, in Christ God achieved a meritorious and divinely acceptable sacrifice which is sufficient for the sins of mankind. ... Furthermore, because the grace whereby He won the victory is the

23. Hall, *The Incarnation*, 104, 153, 189.

24. Hall, *The Incarnation*, 148.

grace in which he enables us to grow, the foregone certainty of His victory does not reduce the value of His example, but demonstrates the certainty of our own victory, if and when we complete the growth in Him which he makes possible for us. ... The Incarnation is thus seen to be the dispensation of grace which is adapted to the necessities of our composite and finite nature. Our own nature has been perfected and consecrated in Christ that it may become the means by which we can lay hold of Him, and enter into an organic and interior union with Him in His mystical Body, the Church. This union in Him makes us sharers in His grace, the appointed sacramental manner of this participation being in line with both the heavenly medium and the earthly recipients of grace.²⁵

Through the sacraments of the Church the Incarnation continues, and our human natures are brought ever closer to human perfection, to the likeness of Christ for which we were created.

Hall's Crusade Against Kenoticism

Francis J. Hall defines the kenotic theory as “maintaining that the Divine Logos, in order to take our earthly nature upon Him and submit in reality to its earthly conditions and limitations, abandoned somewhat at least of what was His before He became incarnate.”²⁶ Hall subscribed to an anti-kenotic view of the Incarnation from early in his theological career, his book *The Kenotic Theory* being published in 1898. His anti-kenotic writing was precipitated by the prominence Kenoticism had recently gained through the work of the Anglican theologian Charles Gore, particularly Gore's essay “The Holy Spirit and Inspiration” published in 1889 in the collection of Liberal Catholic essays in the book *Lux Mundi*.²⁷

25. Hall, *The Incarnation*, 163-165.

26. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 1.

27. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 21. Hall quotes the following passages from Gore's

Hall understands kenotic Christologies to be a modern innovation derived from an erroneous modification of the Lutheran doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*. He defines the traditional doctrine in this way: “Immediately and necessarily involved in our Lord’s possession of the Godhead and the Manhood, each in its integrity, is the truth that whatever is rightly said of these two natures is rightly said of our Lord Himself as their one and only personal subject.”²⁸ The theological alteration on which Hall blames the development of Kenoticism has its roots in the theology of Martin Luther who, while formally retaining the Chalcedonian doctrine of two distinct natures in one person, sought the effects of the divine nature in the humanity of Christ, such that “Whatsoever I behold in Christ is at the same time both human and divine.”²⁹ In a debate with Zwingli on the Eucharistic presence of Christ, Luther argued that the glorified Manhood of Christ was ubiquitous due to its participation in the Godhead and, therefore, in the divine properties. Hall states that the *communicatio idiomatum* eventually came to imply the transfer of properties from one nature to the other, resulting in the coalescence of the divine and human natures in Christ.³⁰ This alteration in theology underlying the doctrine of

essay as those that brought particular and widespread attention to the topic: “It is contrary to [our Lord’s] whole method to reveal His Godhead by any anticipations of natural knowledge. The Incarnation was a self-emptying of God to reveal Himself under conditions of human nature and from the human point of view.” “He willed so to restrain the beams of Deity as to observe the limits of the science of His age, and He puts Himself in the same relation to its historical knowledge. He never exhibits the omniscience of bare Godhead in the realm of natural knowledge.” Charles Gore quoted in Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 21-22.

28. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 40.

29. Martin Luther quoted in Hall, *The Incarnation*, 63.

30. Hall, *The Incarnation*, 63-64. Interestingly, in Hall’s book *The Kenotic Theory*

communication idiomatum, along with the misunderstanding discussed earlier regarding the creedal use of the term ‘person,’ laid the foundation for Kenoticism of the nineteenth century.³¹ For although in Luther’s theology the human nature of Christ played second fiddle to the divine, in modern times it was the divine nature that was curtailed to make room for the full humanity of Christ.³²

Hall’s Christology espouses a non-competitive understanding of the Incarnation not simply to side-step Kenoticism, but because of positive considerations – in addition to the embrace of creedal formulas.³³ For theologians like Hall, who find in Christ’s death

(page 13), he cites the work of Isaak Dorner, including this passage: “[Luther] did, however, insist that each should know the other to be its own – that each should not merely have, but *be*, the other; for it was his conviction that neither of them could realize the true idea of itself, until it should become, until it should actually be, the other;– the deity by its condescending love, the humanity by its divinely filled susceptibility. It is therefore characteristic of Luther, that even at a later period, in speaking of the Person of Christ, he should have always said, not, ‘the person of the Son united within itself the two natures;’ but, ‘the divine and human *natures* were so united with each other, that Christ was but one single *person*.’ The ‘Unio’ he regarded principally (princiell) as an ‘Unio’ of the natures, the result of which is the ‘Unio personalis;’ and no end seemed to him to have been gained unless the natures are united.” Isaak A. Dorner, *The History of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ* Div. II, Volume 2 (New York: T. & T. Clark, 1890), 79.

31. In addition to critical readings of Scripture, David Brown attributes the rise in Kenoticism also to an increase in the personal dimension of religion. As people became more aware of their individuality through the centuries, subjective (appropriationist) views of salvation developed in place of a mere objective salvation based on the actions of Jesus. David Brown, *Divine Humanity: Kenosis and the Construction of a Christian Theology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011), 183-184.

32. Hall, *The Incarnation*, 64-65.

33. In the same way, Kenoticists do not simply choose their understanding of the Incarnation so as to avoid what they see as inevitable conflict between the human and divine attributes in Christ; they also found in their position unique theological sensibilities: “To my mind the advantage of a kenotic account is not that it allows God to wallow in suffering, but that his experience of the world would remain radically different from ours unless he has somehow entered into the human condition. In virtue of having done so, he can then come alongside the sufferer, and offer grace from the inside, as it

on the cross an atoning sacrifice, the divinity of Christ is what gives his sacrifice its unique value. To speak of a Christ who abandoned certain divine attributes at the Incarnation would be to deprive his life, death, and resurrection of its salvific efficacy for all people in all times. For if he did not retain his power, he would not have overcome death.³⁴ Hall goes even further, adding that self-sacrifice in general does not demand that we annihilate any part of ourselves:

When we surrender ourselves for others, we do not change our proper nature, but merely prefer the advantage of others to our own, and adopt conditions, perhaps, which are beneath what pertains to our rightful position and dignity. The sacrifice of self does not mean self-mutilation or self-annihilation, but humiliation and self-surrender. An impoverishment of one's nature or a kenosis of what pertains to it, signifies failure of power and forfeiture of prerogative, and robs self-sacrifice of its ethical significance and value by changing it into self-ruin. The merit of our Lord's death was due to His obedience. But its infinite value for our salvation, and the impossibility that He should be holden of it, arose from His possession of the fulness of the Godhead when he died.³⁵

Hall also argues that, in a consistent reading of scripture, the kenosis of which Paul speaks in the second chapter of Philippians would not refer to a divestment of divine attributes. Just prior to the passage often referred to as the “kenotic hymn,” Paul encourages the Christians in Philippi to practice humility and “to look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.”³⁶ In this context, according to Hall, Christ's kenosis must refer to the ethical treatment and self-surrender to the needs of others – a

were, showing how the situation might, potentially at least, be transformed, or at the very least, be endured.” Brown, 208-209.

34. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 53.

35. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 55-56.

36. Philippians 2:4, NRSV.

metaphorical emptying that is consistent with other times this word is used by Paul in scripture.³⁷

Hall explores six main reasons that theologians give for subscribing to a kenotic Christology. First, Gore and other Kenoticists claim that the Church Fathers failed in their construction of an adequate theology of the Incarnation in three main ways: 1) They do not portray a consciousness in Christ that respects human constraints, 2) Their interpretation of scripture was not sufficiently critical, and 3) They brought to scripture and theological study *a priori* assumptions which pre-determined their doctrinal conclusions.³⁸ To the first charge Hall responds that when speaking of attributes that would not be consistent with human limitations (such as omnipotence or omniscience), we can assume that the early theologians understood there to be two distinct natures in

37. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 57-59. In addition, Hall quotes William Stubbs (an Anglican bishop) from an 1893 article published in the *Church Union Gazette* in which he argues, given the context of Philippians 2: 5-11, against an ontological kenosis based on the need for the possibility of a parallel action in humanity: “There must be a parallel between the example of our Lord’s action, and our duty which it is cited to illustrate. There is in fact no parallel whatever between such a kenosis as that which I have described and that by which it is in our power to imitate the Lord Jesus, as we are exhorted to do on this principle. It is self-surrender, self-effacement, and humiliation for the sake of others, that we are to attempt to practice – not the limitation of our power of helping them, but the devotion of our whole self for them, as He devoted Himself for us.” *The Kenotic Theory*, 59.

38. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 79. According to David Brown, the historical trends taking place in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries laid the groundwork for some of the criticism Hall describes from Kenoticists: “At the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century the rather narrow rationalism of the Enlightenment gave place to a new concern with human experience and feeling that made self-consciousness rather than intellect, sensibility rather than reason, the central categories.” This greater emphasis on experience and consciousness (especially given the rise of psychology), in addition to an increasing reliance on historical study, resulted in the recognition of an inconsistent depiction of Jesus’ consciousness in scripture. Brown, 36 and 40.

Christ and were speaking of the divine nature.³⁹ Hall does acknowledge, though, that St. Augustine and others at times attribute a greater-than-human knowledge to the human mind of Christ, supposing him to feign ignorance instead of being truly limited in his knowledge.⁴⁰ Hall argues that this unbalanced emphasis on the divine nature is not, however, the inevitable outcome of a Nicene Christology but the fault of a few theologians. Further, the modern Kenoticists also exaggerate one nature at the expense of the other, the human side of the equation being overemphasized in their case.⁴¹ Hall dismisses the second charge against the Church Fathers – that of an insufficiently critical engagement with scripture – as perhaps the result of the brevity of their writing (which does not allow in all situations a more thorough explication of a scriptural passage) or the result of a forceful response to a perceived heresy of their time.⁴² Hall then counters the third charge – that of holding metaphysical *a priori* assumptions – by reminding the reader that the assumptions brought to scriptural interpretation by the earliest Christian theologians were those revealed in the faith of the early Church and, therefore, *a posteriori* in kind.⁴³

39. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 82.

40. Hall writes: “It may not be denied, of course, that writers of the time of St. Augustine and subsequent generations did attribute omniscience to our Lord’s human mind. Gore gives examples of this (*Dissertations*, pp.132-138), from which it appears that St. Augustine and others held that our Lord pretended to an ignorance which He did not really possess.” *The Kenotic Theory*, 82.

41. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 83-85.

42. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 87-88.

43. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 89-90.

A second argument used by Kenoticists to defend their position consists of a division between the ethical attributes of God and the metaphysical attributes of God (particularly omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence), with a prioritizing of the ethical. This argument asserts that any limitation on God's condescension or self-emptying would be a limitation of God's love, as well as a limitation on God's freedom.⁴⁴ In response, Hall argues that to treat "abstract" or metaphysical attributes as superfluous to the divine nature is to cast doubt on their reality, for what is real in God cannot be set in opposition to other divine attributes.⁴⁵ In addition, Hall claims that true sympathy requires not an abandonment of absolute power, but its use in service to another:

It is undoubtedly true that genuine sympathy involves a real identification of the stronger with the weaker, but this identification needs analysis. We do not show sympathy with the weak by ceasing to be strong, or with the ignorant and foolish by ceasing to have knowledge and wisdom, but by exercising our strength and wisdom under the conditions of weakness and folly, and by such accommodation and contact with them as will enable us to realize in some measure their misery.⁴⁶

44. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 97.

45. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 98-99. In conjunction with this argument, Hall condemns the tendency to claim ethical immutability within God but not metaphysical immutability, as if the acts of God are antithetical to immutability: "To reason thus is to mistake Divine immutability, which refers to His nature. The Divine *nature* is not changed by Divine action. Moreover, mysterious as is the fact, there is no change in the operations of God considered as His operations. The change appears in the temporal *effects* of His action. His will and operation are eternal and changeless, although He wills and causes effects which are mutable. To will and cause changes is not to change the will and action of the Eternal." Still, as we will see in our discussion of Isaak Dorner's theology, not all theologians understood change that involved only the effects of God's will and not God's will itself as an adequate reflection of a truly ethical God. *The Kenotic Theory*, 100.

46. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 104-105.

Once again, it is precisely the divine power that “gave infinite value to the love and sympathy of Christ while on earth and made His hand ‘mighty to save.’”⁴⁷

Continuing with Hall’s reasons why one might embrace a kenotic Christology, the third argument revolves around the assertion by Kenoticists that Jesus must have experienced a moral progression throughout his lifetime, attained through the aid of the Holy Spirit and not through his humanity’s direct connection with the Second Person of the Trinity; otherwise, he would not be an example for our own moral development.⁴⁸ Hall, however, alleges that the human nature of Christ was perfected from the beginning through “an internal impulse and inspiration which left His human spontaneousness unimpaired.”⁴⁹ This perfection was merely *revealed* progressively, as Jesus grew and encountered a multitude of experiences.⁵⁰ According to Hall, some Kenoticists also contend that if Christ were not able to sin, both his freedom and temptations would be illusory.⁵¹ Regarding the former, Hall counters that conformity to divine will is the ultimate freedom.⁵² Concerning the latter, he argues that, despite Christ’s inability to sin,

47. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 102.

48. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 113 and 123.

49. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 117.

50. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 116. Interestingly, Hall argues that an emphasis on the likeness between Jesus’ and our moral progress can lead to erroneous conclusions: “The undue insistence upon a likeness between our Lord’s moral progress and that which is possible for us may lead some to the modern idea that man’s moral progress is grounded in his own natural gifts and endowments. Whereas it consists really in our advance by the power of Christ’s Godhead, imparted to us through the agency of the Spirit.” *The Kenotic Theory*, 117.

51. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 113-114.

52. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 121.

the union of the divine nature with the human nature in Christ made his experience of temptation all the more palpable.⁵³ In addition to the rebuttals above, Hall goes straight to the core of this kenotic argument and rejects the premise that Christ is to be, in all ways, an example of what our earthly life can be. Instead, he understands the life of Christ to illustrate our “final goal,” a goal that will only be fully attained in the life after this one.⁵⁴

The fourth argument asserted by theologians espousing a kenotic Christology concerns the relative attributes of God – omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. These divine qualities are said to depend upon creation for their realization and, therefore, originate in the will and not the essence of God. As such, the abandonment of these attributes during the Incarnation would not signify a change in the divine essence.⁵⁵ Hall responds to this argument first by insisting that since the world is now in existence, God cannot cease to be omnipotent, omniscient, or omnipresent, for God is always now in relationship with creation.⁵⁶ Hall then demonstrates how each of these qualities has its roots in the eternal essence of God which existed prior to creation. Hall argues that the eternal generation of the Son and procession of the Holy Spirit are the eternal effects of God’s power and, as they constitute the essence of the Triune God, God’s power cannot be lost without a loss in divinity.⁵⁷ The omnipresence of God, according to Hall, pertains

53. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 122-123.

54. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 126.

55. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 129-130.

56. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 131.

57. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 132.

to the immensity of God, as well as God's incomprehensibility – both grounded in God's essence.⁵⁸ Finally, concerning God's omniscience, Hall understands such knowledge to be outside the realm of that which can be attained and, therefore, must be present in God eternally. This knowledge attains to God in God's self (in God's contemplation *qua* Trinity), as well as to things both actual and potential. As such, this attribute is also part of God's essence and cannot be absent in the Incarnation without compromising the immutability of God's nature.⁵⁹

The fifth argument for Kenoticism Hall calls the *a priori* argument, which he defines as bringing to any conversation about the Incarnation the following assumption: “An incompatibility exists between certain Divine attributes and human conditions which it makes impossible to believe in their simultaneous existence or juxtaposition in one person.”⁶⁰ Therefore, any divine attribute that is incompatible with the limitations of the human nature of Christ must be abandoned or held in abeyance during the Incarnation. Hall argues that catholic Christianity refuses to take rationalistic approaches to the juxtaposition of divine and human attributes in one person, preferring instead to rest in the mystery of the Incarnation rather than to allow either the divine or the human nature of Christ to take a back seat to the other.⁶¹

58. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 133.

59. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 134-136.

60. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 138.

61. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 140. Hall names as a characteristic of an orthodox reading of scripture the ability “to hold in juxtaposition those truths which they had received, but the harmony of which they could not exhibit.” He contends that Kenoticists demonstrate an inability to do this. *The Kenotic Theory*, 144-145.

Hall makes two other observations regarding the proposed incompatibility of human and divine attributes. First, he asserts that the difference between divine and human qualities is not always such that the distance between them cannot be traversed: “A real difference of mode is consistent with a real likeness and internal relationship. The contents of Divine knowledge are capable of being translated, to a certain extent at least, into the forms and terms of human knowledge.”⁶² Second, Hall observes that a kenotic Christology leads to one of two outcomes for the exalted Christ who remains both human and divine in nature – either the kenosis is everlasting (in which case Christ remains without the divine attributes of omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence), or the restoration of these qualities results in the deification of Christ’s human nature.⁶³

Finally, we arrive at the sixth argument used by theologians as a reason to embrace Kenoticism – its compatibility with a critical reading of scripture. As mentioned previously, a catholic reading of scripture consists in a reading 1) without *a priori* assumptions that stem from “private judgment,” and 2) through the lens of the Faith of the Church. For Hall, this type of reading is necessary to arrive at an accurate revelation of Christ through scripture. He offers John 17:5 as an example of a passage often used as proof of kenosis: “So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed” (NRSV). While a kenotic reading of this passage understands this request for pre-incarnate glory as evidence of kenosis, Hall interprets the passage as asking for the disclosure of the glory of the Godhead which

62. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 149.

63. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 153.

existed in Christ but was hidden by his human flesh: “What he asked of His Father was either that this glory might be made manifest to His saints, inasmuch as His humiliation was reaching its end, or that His Manhood might be clad with that glory, *i.e.*, enthroned and transfigured at the right hand of God. Possibly His prayer included both ideas.”⁶⁴

Concerning miracles, Hall explains that on some occasions the works of Jesus revealed his human nature, while at other times they revealed his divine nature: “But, lest there should be any mistake as to His Person in the minds of His disciples, He allowed His Godhead to flash forth at times in words and methods of action which sharply differentiate His miracles from those of mere men, however great the supernatural powers may be which God bestows upon them.”⁶⁵ In Hall’s reading of scripture, miracles and other displays of divinity were not problematic in that they prevented the portrayal of a unified consciousness in Christ; instead, they upheld what the early Church knew through faith to be true.

While DuBose’s Christology is marked by a personalistic, Spirit-based and gradual incarnation, the incarnational theology of Francis J. Hall is characterized by a non-competitive hypostatic union mediated by the Second Person of the Trinity. Hall viewed these differences as indicative of an embrace of Kenoticism by DuBose. Before beginning a detailed exploration of how Hall uses key features of DuBose’s incarnational theology to arrive at this conclusion, a consideration of Isaak Dorner’s theology may prove helpful. By DuBose’s own account, Dorner’s multivolume work *The Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ* was the subject of his life study. Dorner himself

64. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 163.

65. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 171.

eschewed the kenotic theory and intentionally crafted his own Christology to avoid the same fate; therefore, any in-depth study into DuBose's own relationship to Kenoticism would well begin with the theology of Dorner. We now turn to that task.

Chapter Three

The Anti-Kenotic Christology of Isaak August Dorner

DuBose returned home from the war to find his family destitute, the land unproductive, the social situation unstable, and his time consumed by pragmatic issues. However, the limited time he managed to spend in study would alter his intellectual and religious life forever:

In the six years of parish work, before coming to Sewanee, my life interest and task, without consciousness or intention on my part, was being determined and fixed for me. Although by every prejudice and intention an Anglican, and unable to use the German language, most of my reading and study at this period was of German authors – evangelical, of course. And it terminated in my selecting for life study Dorner’s great work “The Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ.” In all my consequent, though later, interest in Christology I was not aware, until after I began to publish, of any contemporaneous or recent scientific English thought upon the subject.¹

A brief excursion into the theology of German theologian Isaak August Dorner (1809-1884) reveals the great extent to which it underpins DuBose’s own work. Dorner’s theology is largely a response to the kenotic controversy of his time, and he constructs his theology to avoid kenotic leanings. Therefore, a familiarity with Dorner’s work may illuminate anti-kenotic features in DuBose’s theology as well. In addition, as DuBose never published a straightforward, complete text of systematic theology, an exploration

1. William Porcher DuBose, *Turning Points in My Life* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912), 51-52. In addition to this reference to Dorner’s influence, the following acknowledgement is found in the Preface of DuBose’s *Ecumenical Councils*: “As to the proper subject-matter it is hoped that the necessary indebtedness of any work of historical Christology to the great classic of Dr. Dorner has not in this volume been anywhere disguised. But as the author’s obligation has been probably even more through a long general familiarity with that high authority than from immediate use of it, it is difficult for him to measure its exact extent.” DuBose, *The Ecumenical Councils* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897), xi.

of Dorner's theology may provide insight into the gaps left by DuBose in the doctrines of God and of the Trinity.² In this chapter, we will explore Dorner's theology with special attention to his anti-kenotic arguments, the portrayal of God as Supreme Personality, and a Christology marked by a progressive incarnation.

Isaak August Dorner, the son of a Lutheran pastor, was born on June 20, 1809 in Neuhausen ob Eck in southern Germany. He matriculated at the University of Tübingen in 1827, where he was the student of Ferdinand Christian Bauer and the colleague of David Friedrich Strauss – both of whom were leading figures in the rise of historical criticism (“higher criticism”) of the Bible. After finishing his studies, Dorner served for two years as vicar under his father's supervision before returning to Tübingen, where he was awarded a Doctor of Theology in 1836. Dorner subsequently traveled in Holland and Great Britain to expand his knowledge of the Reformed tradition before beginning his prestigious career in academic theology.³

A summary of Dorner's academic appointments resembles a tour of the great institutions of German higher education: Tübingen (1838-1839), Kiel (1839-1844), Königsberg (1844-1847), Bonn (1847-1853), Göttingen (1853-1862), and Berlin (1862-

2. Although DuBose does include a chapter on the Trinity in *The Gospel in the Gospels*, he acknowledges that it is not his intention to shed light on a Trinitarian ontology: “It has not been my object to add to the solution of the speculative problem of the Trinity. I have only aimed to show practically and spiritually that is at all we are to know and worship God in reality as our God, we must do so as Christianity has always done – as Trinity.” William Porcher DuBose, *The Gospel in the Gospels* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908), 289.

3. The biographical information in this paragraph is from the following article published upon Dorner's death: Egbert Coffin Smyth, “Editorial: Dr. I. A. Dorner,” *Andover Review* 2, no. 8 (August 1884), 176.

1884).⁴ During his time in Berlin, Dorner was appointed as the Prussian Chief Church Councilor and was “an active advocate of further co-operation between Lutheran and Reformed churches begun with the Prussian Union of 1817.”⁵ Dorner’s work was never separated from the Church and the faith which had formed his theological sensibilities from a young age, and “domestic and foreign missions, the religious observance of the Lord’s day, and Sunday-schools found in him a warm supporter.”⁶

By the time his crowning achievement in systematic theology (a four-volume series titled *A System of Christian Doctrine*) was published in 1879-1880, Dorner’s theology was deemed outdated by some, having been eclipsed by the work of Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889).⁷ The intervening century, however, has seen Dorner’s work not only survive, but also enjoy popularity, owing in no small part to the praise heaped by Karl Barth upon Dorner’s essay *Divine Immutability*.⁸ Barth’s reference to Isaak Dorner was

4. John M. Drickamer, “Higher Criticism and the Incarnation in the Thought of I.A. Dorner,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 43(3), June 1979, 198.

5. Jonathan Norgate, *Isaak A. Dorner: The Triune God and the Gospel of Salvation* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 5.

6. Smyth, “Editorial: Dr. I. A. Dorner,” 177.

7. Drickamer, “Higher Criticism and the Incarnation,” 199.

8. Barth refers to Dorner’s three-part essay that would be published as *Divine Immutability* as “Dorner’s great essay” in *Church Dogmatics*, adding “Those who know this essay will recognize . . . how much I owe to Dorner’s inspiration.” Karl Barth as quoted by Robert R. Williams, “Introduction,” in Isaak August Dorner, *Divine Immutability: A Critical Reconsideration*, trans. Robert R. Williams and Claude Welch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 5.

subsequently spotted by Claude Welch, resulting in his English translation of Part III of *Divine Immutability* in 1965 (the first English translation of any part of Dorner's essay).⁹

Dorner's most significant and enduring theological works are the following: *History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ* (a five-volume series, first published in 1839 and revised and expanded between 1845 and 1856), *Divine Immutability: A Critical Reconsideration* (a three-part essay published between 1856 and 1858), *History of Protestant Theology* (a two-volume set, 1871), and *System of Christian Doctrine* (a four-volume series, published in 1879-1880). In 1856, Dorner and his colleagues established and became editors for the journal *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie*, which focused on German theology as described in this way: "Not Scripture alone, nor any material principle without Scripture, but justification by faith in the Christ attested and made present by holy Scripture."¹⁰

Influenced by the philosophy of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel with its dialectical shape of history, endowed with an expansive knowledge of the historical development of theology, and sustained by his Lutheran faith, Dorner understood his own work to be a synthesis that would be tested by time.¹¹ It is in this spirit that he offers up his theological endeavors:

I resign my work to criticism with an easy mind; for its ground-idea that neither a merely historical nor a merely ideal and metaphysical significance belongs to Christ, but rather that both are absolutely one in his perfect Person, whereby He is

9. Williams, "Introduction," 5.

10. Smyth, "Editorial: Dr. I. A. Dorner," 181.

11. Drickamer, "Higher Criticism and the Incarnation," 199. Claude Welch, *God and Incarnation in Mid-Nineteenth Century German Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 111.

the Head, and humanity is not a mere mass but an organism,— this ground-idea I cannot, God be praised, boast of having discovered, though alas! in many ears today it sounds strange; but I have received it through the mediation of the church of Christ, true to the word of Scripture, and I give it back again as it has been reproduced and formed in me.¹²

It was a gift well-received in some parts of the Church. Within two decades of his death in 1884, Dorner's theology would itself be part of a new synthesis in the theology of William Porcher DuBose.

A Theology Formed in Response to Kenoticism

Dorner's theological career began just as Strauss's *Life of Jesus* (1835) was published. This book, which portrayed Jesus in a strikingly human and historical manner, emphasized the giant chasm that existed between Christian orthodoxy and historical-critical scholarship at the time.¹³ Stepping into that chasm and attempting to bridge the two positions were the mediating theologians, who

accepted from historical scholarship a picture of Jesus that emphasized the reality of his humanity in a manner more radical than had ever been done before. But they rejected the conclusions that Baur and Strauss had drawn from this picture, namely that the traditional Christological formulas are no longer useful in interpreting Jesus' significance. Rather they set about the difficult task of incorporating the new historical picture of Jesus into the earlier doctrines of the two natures of Christ and the Trinity.¹⁴

12. Quoted in Smyth, "Editorial: Dr. I. A. Dorner," 180.

13. John M. Drickamer, "Higher Criticism and the Incarnation," 197 and Smyth, "Editorial: Dr. I. A. Dorner," 177-180.

14. John M. Drickamer, "Higher Criticism and the Incarnation," 198. Dorner also saw the crucial point of tension between historical criticism and Christian orthodoxy to be the doctrine of the Incarnation: "It is gratifying to see ... how, in the long conflict between Christianity and Reason, the point, on the handling of which the decision of the controversy turns, has become ever more and more distinct to the consciousness. All the energies of the conflicting parties ... are gathering more and more around the Person of Christ as the central point where the matter must be determined; and by this much is won

While devoting himself to the task of holding in tension the doctrine of the Church and biblical-historical criticism, Dorner did so in response to the Kenoticists of the day. Early in his career, Dorner had considered adopting a kenotic Christology, before ultimately concluding that Kenoticism did not adequately uphold a unified consciousness in Christ and, in some ways, jeopardized the Christian doctrine of God and the Trinity.¹⁵

According to Dorner, few “considerable” theologians of the nineteenth century held to anhypostasis – the position that Jesus did not have a separate human existence apart from his divine person; therefore, the orthodox understanding of the human-divine

for the settlement of the hard strife, for, as in all things, when the question is rightly put the answer is already half found. ... All lies in the question whether such a Christ as dwells in the mind, if not always in the words, of the church – one in whom the perfect personal union of the divine and human appeared historically – be necessary and actual.” Quoted in Smyth, “Editorial: Dr. I. A. Dorner,” 180.

15. Claude Welch, *God and Incarnation*, 106-107. Dorner weighs the theological benefits and costs of both a kenotic and a progressive Christology in a letter to the Dutch Kenoticist Hans L. Martensen dated March 23, 1845: “I see two possibilities ... *Either* I assume a continuing incarnation of the Logos, an increasing forming of himself into this man, in whom human development, even freedom of choice, can thus remain. But this question is whether this supposition does not have to locate the consciousness of the world-bearing and ruling Logos outside this man for the earthly period, and that has an Ebionite, Nestorian appearance. Yet after all this view is sensible and stands closer to the church’s doctrine. *Or* I assume that as the condition of the incarnation there took place a self-divesting on the part of the Logos, in the sense that his loving will reduced itself to mere potency in Christ, which was actualized in the divine-human life activity according to the age levels. This potency so united itself with the humanity that the latter became an element of its actuality in worldly existence; by this very act it so gave itself up to humanity that it is to be looked upon as the latter’s own being. Here I get the full unity of this person in every moment, along with the possibility of a truly human development, more purely than in the former case, but at the price that the Son exists only as potency during the process – which will not do for the sake of the preservation and rule of the world, and perhaps even threatens the Trinity. Anyhow such a change of the divine is always revolting to the church, I fear, even if we establish it ethically and not physically or ethnically.” Quoted in Welch, *God and Incarnation*, 106-107.

unity in the person of Christ was in dire need of revision.¹⁶ If the two natures in Christ are perceived as dualistic and competitive, the construction of a Christology with a true and living union of the two natures becomes extremely difficult. Working within this dualistic paradigm of divine-human incompatibility, Kenoticists sought to articulate a Christology characterized by a complete human nature in Christ which undergoes growth and development over time.¹⁷

Dorner describes the simplest version of a kenotic Christology as that which depicts the Logos as emptying himself to take human form, submitting to human development until through perfection he arrives back at his original state. He refers to this theory as “the *self-mutation* of the Logos into a man.” Dorner contends that “this Christology does not rise, therefore, above a theophany in human form,” as the human soul and nature is, in effect, simply a reduced degree of divinity (a form of Apollinarianism).¹⁸ Therefore, no real unity of the two natures is attained and, as such, the exaltation of the Logos leaves no room for the humanity of Christ.¹⁹ The theology of Johann Ludwig König belongs to this type of kenotic Christology.

Dorner locates Karl Friedrich Gaupp’s theory of the Incarnation in this simplest form of Kenoticism as well, although there are differences between Gaupp’s Christology and that espoused by König. Gaupp contends that the Logos leaves his divine attributes

16. Isaak August Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 3, trans. Alfred Cave and J.S. Banks (New York: T. & T. Clark, 1896), 254.

17. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 3, 263-264.

18. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 3, 265.

19. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 3, 265.

(including that of self-creation) with God the Father, allowing his ego then to be incarnated as a human ego and assume a human nature. While the deification of the human nature is accomplished through the Logos itself in König's theology, in Gaupp's incarnational theology it is the Holy Spirit that facilitates the Logos' arrival at its former state of glory. Dorner writes: "The Holy Spirit must be recognized as the mediating principle, since a divine consciousness alongside of or surpassing Christ's human consciousness is absolutely rejected."²⁰ Of note, the depotentiation of the Logos in Gaupp's theory results in subordinationism within the Trinity.²¹

In *Divine Immutability*, Dorner spends greater space reflecting on Gottfried Thomasius' theory of the Incarnation than that of any other theologian. According to Dorner, Thomasius asserts that the Son of God undergoes condescension and self-limitation to form a living unity of human and divine – the Incarnation. If, at the same time, the Son of God were to continue to function within the immanent Trinity with respect to his world-extensive dominion and divine mode of being, then there is a "dual mode of being, a doubled life and consciousness."²² But Thomasius denies this duality, writing instead the following:

The eternal son, second person of [the] Trinity has abandoned itself to the limitations of a spatiotemporal existence, in the form of human limitedness. Consequently, the assumption of humanity is at the same time a self-limitation of the Son of God. This self-limitation refers not merely to the omnipresence and omnipotence of the Logos, but to the absolute life which is deity, that now comes to exist in the narrow confines of a human life. The essential determinations of

20. Isaak August Dorner, *Divine Immutability: A Critical Reconsideration*, trans. Robert R. Williams and Claude Welch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 59-60.

21. Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 60.

22. Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 67.

God, absolute holiness and truth, are now developed in the form of human thought; absolute love assumes a human shape; it lives as a human feeling in the heart of mankind. Absolute freedom lives in the shape of human determination.²³

For the Son of God to exist only as a human being presents an ontological dilemma each time consciousness and self-consciousness are suspended – such as during fetal development, during sleep, or at the time of death.²⁴ Thomasius responds, however, by maintaining that the ego of the Second Person of the Trinity remains the same. Furthermore, the depotentiation is voluntary, born of love, and a sign of his omnipotence – “for only an omnipotent being can divest itself and remain self-identical.”²⁵ In addition to other difficulties inherent in Thomasius’ kenotic theory, the union of a depotentiated Logos and a human nature is basically “a duality of two similar finite individuals” and not a living, personal union, much less a true incarnation of God.²⁶ In response to this criticism, Thomasius ultimately amended his theory to hold that only the relative divine attributes were relinquished by the Logos at the Incarnation.²⁷

23. Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 67-68.

24. Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 68.

25. Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 69. Although Thomasius holds that love is the motivation for kenosis, Dorner argues that unconsciousness prevents the actuality of love. *Divine Immutability*, 72.

26. Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 71. Dorner writes: “in this theory the humanity and the humiliated Logos stand opposed to each other in Christ with a parallel development; and since parallels never join, as is known, nothing at all is done in this theory for the unity of the person, and the self-renunciation of the Logos accordingly appears as an idle as well as forcible addition, only adapted to destroy the Trinitarian conception of God.” *A System of Christian Doctrine* 3, 265.

27. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 3, 266.

Finally, Dorner explores the kenotic Christology of Wolfgang Friedrich Gess, a theologian who garners Dorner's praise for his honest, consistent, and thorough treatment of kenosis. Gess understands the incarnational process to include the following: 1) the Logos transforms itself into a human soul that possesses true freedom, 2) all divine attributes not compatible with human development are abandoned, 3) advance in holiness for the human nature of Christ is mediated by the Holy Spirit, and 4) the immanent Trinity is changed throughout the life of Jesus. There is no co-origination of the Holy Spirit, and the Son does not participate in the Father's fullness. For Gess, God's form can be changed even in its essence, such that sin is a possibility for incarnated divinity.²⁸ Despite Gess's full embrace of the implications of kenosis, difficulties still arise from his Christology – primarily that he espouses “a concept of God for which it is indifferent, not to mention contingent, whether the hypostasis of the Son is present or absent.”²⁹ In other words, the Son is superfluous in this rendition of the Trinity.

Dorner's discussion of various forms of kenotic Christologies (of which only a portion is presented in this thesis) allows us a glimpse into why Dorner finds kenotic theories inadequate for a living, personal union between the two natures in Christ, as well as the source of yet further doctrinal troubles. One issue brought to the forefront by Kenoticism is that of the immutability of God – a key aspect of orthodoxy that is violated routinely when adopting a kenotic understanding of the Incarnation. While Dorner

28. Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 75-78.

29. Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 78.

rejected Kenoticism as the pathway to divine human union, he did believe that the doctrine of divine immutability warranted further exploration. He writes:

...with respect to Christology, theopassianism in all of its forms is no gain and can prove nothing. But the fundamental question itself has not yet been decided. We must ask, How is the Christian concept of God related to the assumption of change in God? Does it absolutely exclude change? Does not the living communion of God with the world require divine mutability in some sense? Are not those who stand firm by the concept of an unqualified absolute divine immutability in conflict with the fundamental interests of Christian piety? Don't they lapse into a static and wooden relationship between God and the world?³⁰

We turn now to Dorner's exploration of God's immutability, an exploration that ultimately led to a doctrine of God that supported the Christian piety at the center of evangelical faith, an understanding of God as Supreme Personality, the reconstruction of Dorner's doctrine of the Trinity, and a concept of God consistent with a progressive incarnation.

God as Supreme Personality and Holy Love

Although Dorner rejects a kenotic Christology, another reason to rethink the doctrine of divine immutability surfaces – the evangelical faith that rose to prominence with the Reformation. According to Dorner, evangelical piety or personality is comprised of both moral necessity and freedom; as such, it is neither constrained by a rigid, religious legality nor equivalent with subjectivity or arbitrary whim.³¹ However, Dorner

30. Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 81.

31. Isaak August Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 1, trans. Alfred Cave (New York: T & T Clark, 1880), 418.

argues, the concept of God has not changed to reflect the altered post-Reformation, religious landscape:

...the union of these mighty and world-moving opposites, Authority and Freedom, has only found its *anthropological* expression in immediately religious fashion in Christian personality, in the “freedom of a Christian man;” it has not yet found its *theological* expression, although, nevertheless, the highest quality may be attributed to it, that it is godlike. The proper evangelical union of these opposites must have its eternal necessity in God Himself, nay, must have in Him its eternal archetype and its supreme principle. And since the opposites, the union of which is perfected in the Christian personality, are of an ethical kind, it must follow that the fundamental Reformation knowledge of the Christian personality is to be securely and objectively grounded *theologically* in the *ethical* idea of God, seeing that the necessity of these opposites, like their union, is shown in their absolute verification, *i.e.* in God Himself in His ethically thought triune Being.³²

Dorner undertakes the task of constructing an ethical understanding of the Trinity that reflects both an ethical immutability and a freedom of will, two elements that together allow for a living relationship with God which is central to an evangelical faith.³³

32. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 418.

33. Dorner recognizes that there has been, throughout history, a tendency to elevate one aspect over the other. A strong emphasis on the immutability and Transcendence of God results in Deism, while an emphasis on freedom alone leads to an arbitrary Pantheism. The answer, for Dorner, does not lie in a balance, but in a higher principle: “It is still Deism that professes God’s immutability and transcendence, as pantheism does the vitality and immanence of God, so that the wedding or adding of those two contraries does not promise any liberation from the one-sidedness of Deism and pantheism, but rather opens the door to a pure contradiction, thus to a nothingness. ... But if by their methods they do not find a way out of this vicious circle (as is evident), it is nevertheless quite manifest that not only the concept of immutability but that of vitality, both transcendence and immanence, must be conceived *quite differently* than by Deism and pantheism (which may well mutually negate and generate, but can never bring into union the true elements which lie in them). There is thus needed a new, a *higher* principle that the two represent, and this will have to possess the clear and certain norm for the elimination of what is erroneous in both, as well as the power of uniting the moments of truth in them.” Isaak August Dorner, *Divine Immutability: A Critical Reconsideration* (Fortress Texts in Modern Theology) (Kindle Locations 1973-1983). Kindle Edition.

Dorner articulates three understandings of a Trinitarian shape in God that together depict God as Supreme Personality. First, Dorner constructs a Triality of a physical nature as a basis for God's aseity – an eternal process of self-origination.³⁴ If God is eternally making Godself, Dorner reasons, a distinction must exist within God – an effect which is commensurate with Godself and which itself becomes a second efficient cause. This second efficient cause makes its way back to the first by means of a third principle which has the power to both unify and distinguish; in the process, the first efficient cause is established now as effect and not merely cause. This reciprocity – made possible by distinctions within God – is the foundation of God's aseity.³⁵

Dorner then constructs a logical Triality which is the basis for self-consciousness in God. God's knowledge extends to a knowledge of Godself "in such a way that He does not merely think His thought, but His Being also and His life, nay, that the whole fulness He has of real forces of life, of beauty, and of harmony, is illuminated by His Self-consciousness."³⁶ God (who is Infinite Spirit) projects a counterpart to Godself – as thinker to thought, per Dorner, or as subject to object. However, a third factor is necessary for God to know the objectified thought as God, to return from the thought itself to the thinker. In this way the divine becomes self-conscious, becomes an Ego.³⁷

34. The three members of what Dorner calls a Triality are modes of being and not Persons, because he understands them as arising from the trinitarian processes but not synonymous with the Trinity itself. Norgate, 43.

35. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 420-422.

36. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 422.

37. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 422-424.

Dorner describes the objectification that leads to complete Self-Knowledge for God in this way:

In order to embrace everything He is with His Self-consciousness, God makes the everything, *i.e.* Himself, an object to Himself, concentrates all His fulness into an image of Himself, which is a new mode of Being, *i.e.* a mode of Being which would be non-existent but for the Self-diremption, not a mere thought, but a realized thought, in which dwell the essentiality and fulness of the Godhead, and which is an absolute image of the Godhead, in order that He may perceive and know Himself therein.³⁸

The third mediating principle brings to consciousness the identity of essence in all three modes, and God's self-knowledge is complete.³⁹

Dorner then explores the final Triality, the one toward which his exploration of trinitarian processes has been building – the ethical Trinity which is the basis for divine love. For centuries theologians have debated the source of God's goodness: Does it arise from the nature of God or from the will of God? The issue at hand is one of ethical necessity versus free will. If one answers that the source of God's goodness is an immutable goodness which is God's very essence, then both a freedom to love and a living relationship are precluded from God. On the other hand, if God wills the good outside of any ethical necessity, goodness may become arbitrary and inconsistent – making possible faith in God's power alone.⁴⁰

The answer, for Dorner, begins with an ethical necessity grounded in God's essence as Goodness (the first Principle), but this is not the whole story. From the two

38. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 424.

39. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 424.

40. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 431.

previous triads, we know that God is also both self-producing and self-conscious. Therefore, Dorner concludes that God “wills to constitute Himself an ethical Being in a living manner” and not rigidly so, for God as Spirit is characterized by self-determination or freedom – the second Principle of God, known to us as God the Son.⁴¹ This freedom is manifest in a perpetual and ethical movement within God toward that which is outside of God, a movement that establishes God as Holy Love.⁴² The divine free will is referred back to the ethically necessary in a reciprocal move through which the will is conditioned by goodness of God.⁴³ Contrary to what is often perceived to be the relationship between the free and the necessary, the two Principles are cooperative and not competitive. For in the ethically necessary (the Father) from which originate the distinct modes of being within God, the Son finds himself; and in the ethically necessary as it is freely willed (the Son), God as Father recognizes his own essence. It is the third Principle – the Holy Spirit – that unites the free will and the ethical necessity in mutual self-recognition and is, therefore, the Spirit of Love.⁴⁴

Through this series of trinitarian articulations, in which God is found to be characterized by both self-consciousness and self-determination, Dorner concludes that

41. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 434.

42. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 434.

43. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 434-435.

44. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 435-437. According to Dorner, unless the Son recognizes the ethically necessary as constitutive of his own essence and, therefore, as his own good, the ethically necessary would be something to which he merely willingly submits. This would be a form of Subordinationism. *A System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 436.

God is absolute Personality.⁴⁵ One may contend that personality makes God an individual, thereby rendering the difference between human beings and God one of degree only and not kind. However, for Dorner, God is differentiated from finite spirits by God's aseity, which sets God apart from all other personalities and enables God to communicate Godself without fear of self-depletion.⁴⁶ For God does not require an "other" for God's existence, self-knowledge, or love; God is primarily all of these within Godself, granting to God a transcendence and self-preservation that prevents any lapse into pantheism. Because God's love is not limited to God's own Goodness but to goodness in general, God as ethical Trinity is also not confined to a separate existence characteristic of deism. In fact, as the source of all being, God is not excluded from any part of the world.⁴⁷ This unity of Transcendence and Immanence allows God to give Godself to that which is not God through volition, and not effusion – it is the combination of self-preservation and self-communication necessary for love.⁴⁸

God as Personality "is, knows, wills, Himself, without detriment to His unity, in each of the three Hypostases, and thus threefold or in a threefold manner, and, conversely, each of the three Hypostases or modes of Being has its share in the divine Personality."⁴⁹ Dorner's Ontological Argument winds its way through the physical and

45. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 438.

46. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 442.

47. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 440.

48. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 443-444.

49. Dorner, *System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 451.

logical attributes of God, but ultimately rests in the ethical Trinity, for Love is “the only adequate definition of the Essence of God.”⁵⁰ A combination of the ethically necessary and the free, God loves of God’s own volition and enters living relationships with individual human beings – relationships open to specific acts and special providence, relationships which form the basis of evangelical piety. In all such relationships, God remains consistent with God’s expression as ethical Trinity: “the regulation for the divine communication is supposed, that it should not impart itself to the creature in a manner injurious to freedom, in a physical process, by force or by magic.”⁵¹ Dorner’s articulation of divine Personality as Holy Love would go on to have significant implications for his theory of the Incarnation.

A Progressive Incarnation

Dorner’s attempt to construct a Christology consistent with an evangelical faith reveals the interdependence of the major Christian doctrines – God, the Trinity, and the Incarnation, as well as the resulting Christian anthropology. After articulating a Trinitarian doctrine that conceives of God as absolute Personality, with both immutable essence and self-determination, Dorner constructs a theory of the Incarnation characterized by a complete human personality, the full range of human development, and an avoidance of the kenotic theory.⁵² He begins his Christology, in keeping with the

50. Dorner, *System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 454.

51. Dorner, *System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 457.

52. Isaak August Dorner, *The History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ* Div. II, Vol. 3, trans. Patrick Fairbairn (New York: T & T Clark, 1878), 229.

Lutheran axiom *humana natura capax divinae*, with the claim that “the divine and human are not mutually exclusive, but connected magnitudes, having an inward relation to, and reciprocally confirming, each other; by which view both separation and identification are set aside.”⁵³ This non-competitive, non-dualistic view of the divine and human natures is the foundation of a personal and living union between God and human beings.

For Dorner, the humanity of Christ differs from the humanity of all other individuals in that his susceptibility to God has a universal significance for all humanity; it is a capacity for God shaped by the Logos as the personal subject of the human nature in Christ. This distinction between Christ’s humanity and our own underlies Christ’s becoming the center of history, the head of creation, and the perfect revelation of the end for which we were created, as Dorner explains:

...only on one condition can Christ be regarded as the seat of the central revelation of God, after the movement of the divine heart, to wit, that He is not merely a limited, single individuality, like others, but that He was the meeting point of an universal and absolute susceptibility on the part of human nature to God, and of the absolutely universal or central self-communication of God. ... indeed, a man of such universal susceptibility cannot be understood, save on the supposition that the Logos prepared him as an adequate place for His incarnation.⁵⁴

God’s self-communication, originating in the compassionate will of God, completes the naturally susceptibility to God that exists in Christ’s humanity; this is the only sense in which Dorner’s Christology is kenotic.⁵⁵ Divine self-communication does not result in

53. Dorner, *The History of the Development*, 232.

54. Dorner, *The History of the Development*, 235.

55. Dorner, *The History of the Development*, 235. Of note, as the Incarnation is the means by which the susceptibility within human nature – a susceptibility with which human beings are created, and unable to fill in and of themselves – is filled, it follows

God's depletion for two reasons. First, according to Dorner, by taking humanity into Godself, God ultimately retains that which has been communicated.⁵⁶ Second, perhaps an even greater source of God's self-preservation is God's aseity – the eternal self-origination of God within Godself.

Because both the divine and human natures are personal in form, self-consciousness and freedom on both sides establish the basis of their personal union, a union which consists of the fulfillment of each nature in and through the other. The human nature in Christ comes to know itself as the central susceptibility to God, now filled by God; humanity receives this divine self-communication as its own highest self, that for which it was created by God. In the same way, the Logos understands its self-communication to Christ's humanity as the fulfillment of its own intention and nature as love.⁵⁷ In Dorner's Christology, the Ego – the place of the union of divine and human natures in Christ – does not stand above personality or nature (as in more orthodox understandings of the Incarnation); instead, the Ego resides within personality:

...the Ego is nothing else than the divine and the human nature as self-knowing and self-willing. If now these are inwardly related to each other even in themselves, they will also be capable of combining to form an unity as self-knowing and self-willing. It is therefore not merely possible, but necessary, that the consequence of the indissoluble union between God and man should be, that this man, in knowing and willing himself, knows himself as the central susceptibility, who has become absolutely filled with that for which he possessed the susceptibility, and possesses that fulness as his own. ... In precisely the same manner does the Logos, in power of His love, know humanity as a determination of Himself, to give which to Himself there was in Him the eternal possibility and will. Whether, therefore, we take our start with the Logos or with the man, we find that the self-consciousness (and volition) of each included the other

that, for Dorner, the Incarnation is not a response to sin but to the free love of God. *The History of the Development*, 236.

56. Dorner, *The History of the Development*, 236.

momentum in itself as a determination of itself. What, consequently, is present on both sides, is nothing but the *divine-human* consciousness.⁵⁸

In other words, the humanity of Jesus finds the complement to its susceptibility in self-communicating divinity, and human volition finds its counterpart in the divine will of the Logos.⁵⁹ While ethical necessity does not exist in human beings in the same way as in God, the revelation of the divine-human union in the person of Christ discloses our truest essence and shapes our will through faith – preventing an arbitrariness to our decisions and conforming our will to that of God. Thus, our faith has a moral dimension.⁶⁰

Given that the union between the divine and human natures in Christ requires the conscious choice of the human nature, and that human consciousness develops only over time, a full and personal union at the moment of human conception is an impossibility. Dorner describes two ways in which the Logos might respond to the limitations of human development in the Incarnation. First, as Kenoticists advocate, the Logos could divest itself of power (even to the point of giving up its own consciousness) and be joined with the humanity of Christ, only then to develop consciousness as a divine-human unity. This

57. Dorner, *The History of the Development*, 248-249.

58. Dorner, *The History of the Development*, 248-249.

59. Dorner, *The History of the Development*, 257. Dorner uses conscience as an analogy for the divine-human consciousness: “An analogy to this united self-knowledge and willing of the Divine and human in the God-man is given in *conscience* (with its relation to the will), in which a Divine knowledge becomes at the same time human, affording knowledge in which we have a knowledge of the Divine and of the holy law as the thought and will of God, in which nevertheless this Divine thought and will becomes at the same time our own knowledge, and in which we receive into ourselves a Divine volition as an impulse, which can and ought to become our own volition at the same time.” *System of Christian Doctrine* 3, 317.

60. Dorner, *The History of the Development*, 245.

kenotic Christology, argues Dorner, is not consistent with God as personality (which requires the Son in its divine self-determination for realization). In addition, such suspension of consciousness results in the suspension of the Logos' love as well; therefore, any self-communication of the Logos to the humanity of Christ in its development is out of the question. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit, the third party on which the growth and development of the humanity in Christ must now rely, cannot be said to proceed from the Logos or to work in cooperation with it.⁶¹

The other option described by Dorner maintains that the Logos placed a limitation not on its power, but on its self-communication – such that the self-communication of the Logos occurred in keeping with the development of human consciousness. Dorner writes:

According to this view, the being and actuality (the inner and the cosmical) of the Logos remained unchanged; and even this man possessed the being and actuality of the Logos as his own property in virtue of the indissoluble union established from the beginning, merely so far as was compatible with the truth of human growth. For this reason, the eternal personality of the Logos did not immediately, and ere there was an human consciousness, become divine-*human* (although the being and action of the Logos are and remain personal). The Logos, who, at the beginning *qua* person or self-consciousness did not yet communicate Himself, remained in and by Himself (that is, he rested *relatively*, and restricted His self-communication) in so far as humanity lacked the ability to receive Him.⁶²

In Dorner's unfolding of this second view, the Logos so shapes the human nature of Christ that it can be called a holy nature and Christ can be called the Son of God. The union of the two natures is not complete, however, until a fully developed human consciousness completely appropriates the divine attributes being communicated to it.⁶³

61. Dorner, *The History of the Development*, 250-254.

62. Dorner, *The History of the Development*, 250-251.

63. Dorner, *The History of the Development*, 251.

Although the Logos is the personal subject of the humanity of Christ, any subjective appropriation of the attributes of God occurs through the Holy Spirit.⁶⁴ The difference between these two understandings of the Incarnation can be characterized as a depotentiation of the Logos versus a Logos capable of self-communication, an instantaneous process versus a progressive process, the production of a divine-human nature vs. the production of a divine-human person.

In summary, Dorner's Christology is characterized by the following: 1) a personalistic conception of God and humanity marked by self-consciousness and self-determination; 2) an ethical understanding of the incarnation characterized by divine self-communication and by human appropriation of that which is communicated; 3) a gradual incarnation limited by human development; 4) a respect for human freedom; and 5) no abandonment of divine attributes by the Logos. While the similarities between the incarnational theologies of Dorner and DuBose are striking, the motivation underlying their personalistic view of reality differs. Dorner embraces a personalistic understanding of God for its compatibility with a living relationship between God and humanity – a key aspect of evangelical piety. However, while DuBose also places much emphasis on the self-determination of humanity, he seems to do so from a perspective that resonates with American Personalism.

DuBose and American Personalism

64. Dorner, *System of Christian Doctrine* 3, 344.

Although Schleiermacher was the first to use the term *personalism*, American philosopher and theologian Borden Parker Bowne was the first to write a systematic treatment of the philosophy, publishing a book of that name in 1907.⁶⁵ DuBose does not mention Bowne or the Boston School of Personalism; however, especially in his later book *The Reason of Life* (1911), he presents, either in passing or for discussion, several ideas that resonate with the basic tenets and language of American Personalism.

For example, DuBose subscribes to a worldview in which behind the world of experience, the phenomenal world, lies the invisible world of persons – a world of “mind, spirit, or intelligence.”⁶⁶ Both Bowne and DuBose distinguish between mechanical and volitional causation. Mechanical causation acts on the plane of phenomena and looks to the past for the determination of present events.⁶⁷ Volitional cause points behind the phenomenal world to the reason and will of the personal world, especially to the infinite Spirit and ultimate source – God. In the same way, DuBose understands creation to occur via immanent processes (mechanical causation on the phenomenal plane) and through spiritual processes (or volitional causation which is transcendent).⁶⁸ Both Bowne and DuBose view the relationship between God and human beings as mutually transcendent.

65. Rufus Burrow, Jr., *Personalism: A Critical Introduction* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999), 15.

66. Burrow, 1. Referring to the Gospel of John, DuBose equates the Logos with Life and locates both in the eternal, personal realm: “life belongs to the category of that which was – prior to all phenomenal appearing or becoming.” *The Reason of Life*, 25.

67. Borden Parker Bowne, *Personalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1908), 180.

68. DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, 14-15.

Without such transcendence, a reciprocal relationship based on love or compassion or understanding would not be possible.⁶⁹ A thorough exploration of the resonance between DuBose's theology and American Personalism is beyond the scope of this thesis.

However, these few examples demonstrate an emphasis on the integrity of personhood in the theology of DuBose – particularly in his later work and with respect to the “law of personality” and mutual transcendence. This later work correlates in time with the rise in American Personalism; it also reveals concerns held in common by the Personalist movement and DuBose – concerns not explicitly present in the work of Dorner.

Dorner's theology was formed largely as a response against Kenoticism and significantly affected DuBose's own Christology. Given the lack of a systematic theology inclusive of the doctrines of God and the Trinity in DuBose's own published works, a greater knowledge of Dorner's theology may fill in some of the gaps left by a lack of explicitness in DuBose's writing. Meanwhile, in hope that such insight will enable a more thorough response to Hall's categorization of DuBose's Christology as kenotic, we

69. Bowne, 284. The following passage by DuBose exhibits a commitment to the mutual transcendence that marks the divine-human relationship: “To begin with, if religion, considered only on our part, is a transcendent act, an act of objective attitude and relation, a conscious and free going out of ourselves to a Spirit and Life of the universe which, however it may include us and be in us, yet is infinitely without and transcends us – if, I say, religion is thus distinctly transcendent on our part, why must it not be similarly transcendent on God's part? Why must it not be God, as it were, coming forth from Himself to meet us, who – in a relative sense at least, in consciousness and in freedom – are as objective to Him as He to us? ... If I speak and God hears, if I cry and God answers: if in any sense, and to any extent, there is spiritual interrelation and intercommunication, then there is real transcendence, an objective correspondence between God and us, each in that respect outside the one of the other. And nothing short of this is really religion, or is what will fill and satisfy the human need and demand for religion.” *The Reason of Life*, 73-74.

now turn to the examples used by Hall as evidence of DuBose's Kenoticism, responding to each one in turn.

Chapter Four

Is a Personalistic, Progressive Incarnation a Kenotic Christology?

While William Porcher DuBose and Isaak August Dorner both espouse a progressive incarnation defined by a transcendent, personal relationship marked by self-consciousness and self-determination, Francis J. Hall holds tightly to an orthodox understanding of the Incarnation, with the union of the human and divine natures taking place at the level of the subject or person of Christ (terms which are duly safeguarded). All three theologians decry traditional Kenoticism and employ non-competitive explanations of the hypostatic union to avoid resorting to a kenotic Christology in their own theology.¹ Still, in his book *The Kenotic Theory*, Hall cites passages from DuBose's works to illustrate some of the common arguments used by theologians to support a kenotic Christology; therefore, he seems to consider DuBose himself to be a Kenoticist. In this chapter, we will explore these illustrative passages, as well as specific features of DuBose's theology that resemble those of Kenoticists, and offer a response to Hall's assertions.

1. DuBose writes: "With regard to the modes in which Christian thought has tried to conceive and represent the 'becoming-man' of God, those are without question to be finally rejected which are based upon the principle of an absolute self-depotentiation of the Logos. It is impossible to entertain the idea of any suspension of those functions of the eternal second person of the Trinity which are a part of the internal and essential life of God. It is equally impossible to think of any interruption of the cosmic functions of the eternal reason, will and energy of the universe." DuBose, *The Ecumenical Councils* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897), 333-334.

An Emphasis on a Unified Consciousness in Christ

Hall proposes that some theologians may embrace a kenotic theology due to perceived inadequacies of early Christian writers. One such complaint voiced by Kenoticists is that the Church Fathers often portray a disunified consciousness in Christ that does not respect human constraints.² To their allegation Hall responds that when speaking of attributes that would not be consistent with human limitations (such as omnipotence or omniscience), we can assume that the early theologians understood there to be two distinct natures in Christ and were speaking of the divine nature.³ Hall accuses DuBose of a misreading of Pope Leo I when DuBose writes the following in *Ecumenical Councils*:

The time is past when we can ascribe to the humanly developing and incomplete Manhood of our Lord on earth any act of immediate and non-human omnipotence or omniscience. Against this fundamental truth the great Leo himself and many able theologians then and now offend when they represent the human Jesus as now manifesting the properties of man and now those of God.⁴

The nineteenth century – with its reaction against the narrow intellectualism of the Enlightenment, and its witness of the birth of Psychology – was marked by an emphasis on consciousness and experience; therefore, the lack of unified consciousness in scriptural representations of Jesus became increasingly apparent.⁵ Given these cultural forces and DuBose’s own personalistic theology, Hall seems justified in placing DuBose

2. Francis J. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory: Considered with Particular Reference to Its Anglican Form and Arguments* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898), 79.

3. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 82.

4. DuBose, *Ecumenical Councils*, 339.

5. See footnote 38 on page 50.

among those for whom a unified consciousness and a respect for the limits of Christ's humanity would be important. Although DuBose held this concern in common with Kenoticists, this alone does not justify his placement in the school of Kenoticism. In addition, Hall's insistence that DuBose misreads the work of St. Leo loses some of its force when Hall immediately thereafter acknowledges that St. Augustine and others did, in fact, at times attribute a greater-than-human knowledge to the human mind of Christ, supposing him to feign ignorance instead of being truly limited in his knowledge.⁶

A Distinction Between Ethical and Metaphysical Attributes of God

According to Hall, Kenoticists often separate the ethical attributes of God (e.g. love) from the metaphysical attributes (e.g. omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence), justifying a kenotic Christology by prioritizing the ethical. Kenoticists argue that any limitation on God's condescension or self-emptying would be a limitation of God's love, as well as a limitation on God's freedom.⁷ Hall once more refers to a passage from DuBose's *Ecumenical Councils* as an example of the argument made by kenotic writers:

Again, we need to remember that the incarnation is an incarnation not of the physical properties but of the spiritual, moral and strictly personal qualities of God. It is God in man in the sense and manner in which it was the nature of God

6. Hall writes: "It may not be denied, of course, that writers of the time of St. Augustine and subsequent generations did attribute omniscience to our Lord's human mind. Gore gives examples of this (*Dissertations*, pp.132-138), from which it appears that St. Augustine and others held that our Lord pretended to an ignorance which He did not really possess." *The Kenotic Theory*, 82.

7. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 97.

and man to be one in the other. It was not the nature of man to share the natural or physical but only the spiritual and personal qualities of God.⁸

Hall claims that DuBose errs when he understands the Incarnation as the sharing of divine attributes with Christ's humanity and not as a hypostatic union that safeguards the distinctness of the two natures.⁹

Hall is justified in his claim that DuBose, along with Kenoticists, places greater emphasis on the ethical qualities of God and understands God's greatest power to be displayed in the Incarnation (particularly the crucifixion), as seen in the continuation of the passage above:

“Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect” does not mean, be omniscient or omnipotent. It means, love as God, give and forgive as God, die for one another as God has died for you, have the character and live the life of God, be your divine and not your earthly, sensual, devilish self. When our Lord said “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” he did not mean that we had seen in him the divine omnipotence or omniscience. We saw something better and higher than that, even the divine love that is not any property of God but God himself, and that we saw raised to its highest power in the incarnation and the cross. That can be in man and was in man and only makes him infinitely more man. But omniscience and omnipotence cannot be in him and he remain man.¹⁰

However, DuBose does not separate love from other divine attributes such as omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, or infinitude only then to abandon those attributes to prevent competition between divine and human natures in Christ. Instead, DuBose's emphasis on spiritual and ethical qualities stems from his personalistic

8. DuBose, *Ecumenical Councils*, 332.

9. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 97. Of note, for DuBose, the inability of physical properties to be shared is actually the source of distinction between God and human beings: “Though the catholic doctors did not always mean it, the catholic doctrine of the distinctness of the natures in the unity of the person meant that the physical properties of one nature did not pass over into the other nature.” *Ecumenical Councils*, 339.

10. DuBose, *Ecumenical Councils*, 332.

theology – a theology which posits spirit as the ultimate reality and any true union as one of spirits or personalities.¹¹ As such, the Incarnation is a sharing of spiritual and ethical qualities – “mutual knowledge, love, will, action, and life.”¹²

A Moral Progression Throughout the Life of Jesus

Hall asserts that some theologians espouse a kenotic Christology out of a conviction that Christ must have experienced a moral progression throughout his lifetime, attained through the aid of the Holy Spirit and not through his humanity’s direct connection with the Second Person of the Trinity; otherwise, he would not be an example for our own moral development.¹³ Once more, we find some consonance between the described kenotic position and the theology of DuBose. For DuBose, the Incarnate Word is the Logos in the mode of a human being, with a human personality. DuBose does not

11. DuBose explains: “...it is not until we have entered into the conscious and free relation of distinct and independent persons ... that religion exists. The bond that constitutes it is not the immanent, physical, natural one of the universal inherence, connection, and dependence of all things upon God, but the rational, moral, and spiritual one of mutual knowledge and understanding, mutual love and agreement, mutual good will and consentient action between persons, between men and God. What I have called the *encosmic* relation of God to the world is properly described as immanent, and is subject to the universal and admitted laws of immanence, uniformity, necessity, and whatever else. But the *incarnate* relation of God to men is distinctively a transcendent one, a relation of either to the other from without. The former or encosmic relation underlies our natural constitution and faculties, our congenital affinity or congruity with God, our potentiality of the divine in ourselves. The relation of incarnation is one of spirits – based indeed and conditioned upon natures, but in itself that of persons.” William Porcher DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, (New York: Longman’s, 1912), 41.

12. DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, 40.

13. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 113-124.

deny the direct action of the second Person of the Trinity on the human nature of Christ; as described more fully by Dorner, the humanity in Christ differs from our own in the universal significance of its susceptibility for God, a susceptibility formed by the Logos as its personal subject. DuBose writes:

[Jesus] in no wise differs from other men save that he is the universal and the divine become particular and human while we who are particular and human become in him universal and divine, or in other words he is primarily divine and secondarily human while we are primarily human and secondarily divine. He is both proper and adopted Son of God while we are only adopted and not proper sons of God.¹⁴

However, the Incarnate Word does not represent the Incarnation in its fullness, for the Incarnation, according to DuBose, includes not only the Word made flesh but also the flesh made holy.

The Incarnation consists in the spiritual union of God and humankind (a transcendent union, not an immanent union) in the person of Jesus Christ; it is made visible through the holiness achieved in and by the human nature of Christ. This is an inevitably progressive process that, respecting the law of personality, requires an active participation by the humanity of our Lord over time and corresponding to human development:

We are not, then, to view the Incarnation as *completed* on the mere physical birth of Jesus. The Incarnation was an entrance into *humanity*, and the humanity of our Lord Himself was not complete. It was not all there, in that which He received of His mother. In the moment of birth the physical humanity was there only inchoately, and a moral or spiritual humanity was there, as yet, not at all. It is in the whole Christ, in our Lord in the plenitude and perfection of His spiritual, moral, and natural manhood, as fully expressing the divine mind and meaning, as fully realizing the divine love, or self-communication and self-reproduction in humanity, that we see the Incarnation. And such an Incarnation must have been a

14. DuBose, *Ecumenical Councils*, 331.

progressive and not an instantaneous one, a process which was complete only in the resurrection and in the spiritual manhood of our Lord as the second Adam.¹⁵

The Incarnation is mediated through the Holy Spirit not because the Logos is depotentiated, as is the case for some Kenoticists, but because the mediator of a subjective appropriation, in keeping with the non-coercive action of God on humanity, is the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ An emphasis on the subjective quality of the Incarnation is fitting given DuBose's personalistic emphasis on freedom and self-determination. This facet of DuBose's Christology does not require that he ascribe to a kenotic theology.

Furthermore, although Hall argues that "an undue insistence upon a likeness between our Lord's moral progress and that which is possible for us may lead some to the modern idea that man's moral progress is grounded in his own natural gifts and endowments," he is not consistent in downplaying the benefits that can arise from similar moral interpretations of the Incarnation.¹⁷ This inconsistency is manifest in Hall's advocacy for a moral and not ontological kenosis in Christ based on the second chapter of

15. DuBose, *The Soteriology of the New Testament* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1892), 181-182.

16. DuBose writes: "We see thus why it is that everywhere, in the conception and birth of our Lord Himself, in the spiritual birth of baptism, in the spiritual life of the Eucharist, it is always *the Word by the Spirit*. The eternal Logos, or Son, became and becomes, incarnate by the Holy Ghost; that is what constitutes spiritual as distinguished from natural creation. It is not the immediate and necessary creation of the Word alone, but the creation of the Word mediated through the Spirit, *i.e.* through a subjective influence upon the mind, the will, the desires, and the free choice and activity of the subjects of the creation. The Spirit, and consequently the Word through the Spirit, working always in and upon free subjects, never operates irresistibly or necessarily; it works through the consent and choice, and so the personal self-working, of its subjects, and its working is always *theirs* also." *The Soteriology of the New Testament*, 178-179.

17. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 177.

Philippians, as Hall approvingly quotes William Stubbs (who as Bishop of Oxford sought to eradicate Kenoticism in the following charge to the clergy in his diocese):

There must be a parallel between the example of our Lord's action, and our duty which it is cited to illustrate. There is in fact no parallel whatever between [an ontological] kenosis as that which I have described and that by which it is in our power to imitate the Lord Jesus, as we are exhorted to do on this principle. It is self-surrender, self-effacement, and humiliation for the sake of others, that we are to attempt to practice – not the limitation of our power of helping them, but the devotion of our whole self for them, as He devoted Himself for us.¹⁸

Similarly, although there is an infinite difference between ourselves and Christ in the perfection attained, the subjective appropriation by Christ's humanity of the divine self-communication provides an illustration of the process of sanctification and self-sacrifice to which we are called.

Of note, in *The Kenotic Theory*, Hall speaks of Dorner's progressive incarnation as a way to evade the problem of kenosis, but he finds it to be flawed as a Christology. Having no success formulating a fully divine and fully human person in Christ when starting from the Ego, Dorner begins with the two natures themselves to form a divine-human person – which, according to Hall, perpetuates “the Lutheran error of merging the two natures into one divine-human person and consciousness.”¹⁹ However, given that the Incarnation for both Dorner and DuBose is one of spiritual attributes only, and that it results in the fulfillment of each nature and not in their confusion or annihilation, their Christologies do not lead to the mixing of divine and human metaphysical attributes as

18. Quoted in Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 59 n.

19. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 19-21.

occurred with the Lutheran Eucharistic doctrine of divine ubiquity (which Hall views as the first step on the road to Kenoticism).²⁰

An Assumption of Divine-Human Incompatibility

Hall refers to one case for Kenoticism as the *a priori* argument, which he defines as bringing to any conversation about the Incarnation the following assumption: “An incompatibility exists between certain divine attributes and human conditions which it makes impossible to believe in their simultaneous existence or juxtaposition in one person.”²¹ As an illustration of what he calls a rationalistic approach to the juxtaposition of the divine and human natures in Christ, Hall uses the following sentence from DuBose’s *Soteriology of the New Testament* : “Everything in the man Christ Jesus is properly and truly human. His knowledge is wholly human knowledge; His power a human power; His whole personal life as man a human life.”²² In the context of this particular passage, DuBose is emphasizing that the Logos actually *became* human in Jesus Christ; Christ did not simply appear to be human. As a human being, the divinity of Christ is known only in and through the perfection of his humanity.²³

20. Hall explains that Luther “based the real presence upon the contention that the glorified Manhood of Christ is ubiquitous by virtue of its union with the Godhead and its participation in the properties of that nature. He did not actually merge the lower nature into the higher one, but he regarded the Manhood as the organ and bearer of the Godhead, and this in practical effect meant a certain deification of the Manhood.” Francis J. Hall, *The Incarnation* (New York: Longman’s, Green, and Company, 1915), 63.

21. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 138. A response to this argument has already been formulated in part in the previous discussion of ethical versus physical attributes.

22. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 141.

23. DuBose, *The Soteriology of the New Testament*, 138-141.

Hall uses the following two passages from DuBose's *Ecumenical Councils* more successfully to support his allegation that DuBose subscribes to an *a priori* assumption of the incompatibility of divine and human attributes.

All the personal, spiritual, moral qualities can incarnate themselves but the physical or natural properties of God cannot be incarnate because it is not the nature or within the potentiality of man to contain or possess them.²⁴

To say that the Logos became man is in itself to say that the Infinite entered into limitations.²⁵

Although DuBose clearly understands the metaphysical qualities of God to be incompatible with those of Christ's human nature, his definition of the Incarnation as the divine self-communication of spiritual, and not physical, qualities means that the union of divine and human natures in Christ is not jeopardized by this incompatibility. However, on the question of how one type of attributes could be communicated separate from another type, DuBose chooses mystery over a rationalistic, kenotic approach: "It may not be possible for us to explain how the omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent Logos entered personally into humanity without bringing with him into it all these properties but we have not to give a natural explanation of the mystery of the incarnation."²⁶ DuBose subsequently rejects any self-depotentiation of the Logos.

Of note, in this same section of *The Kenotic Theory* Hall accuses DuBose of a pantheistic tendency in his work, as well as a Socinian drift. The care with which DuBose

24. DuBose, *Ecumenical Councils*, 333.

25. DuBose, *Ecumenical Councils*, 336.

26. DuBose, *Ecumenical Councils*, 336.

sought to balance the immanence and transcendence of God to avoid both pantheism and deism has already been discussed. The charge of Socinianism may stem from DuBose's emphasis on the law of personality, as he describes in *The Reason of Life*:

All rational, moral, spiritual creation is creation through and by ourselves; God does nothing in a Self that is not also the doing of the self. That is the condition and law of personality; anything done merely upon us, that is not also our own doing, that is instead of our own doing, or that saves or spares us the doing, is at the cost or expense of us; it displaces and annuls the personality which is the one object and aim.²⁷

DuBose acknowledges that he concentrates on humanity's movement toward God in the Incarnation, leaving the movement of God towards humanity in God's hands: "And what is of most consequence in what is revealed in [Jesus] is not how God may be human but how man may become divine. The former is God's part which we may safely leave to him, the latter is ours and it behooves us to know and perform it."²⁸ Unless one realizes that the divine movement is presupposed in much of DuBose's work, one may erroneously attribute, like Hall, a Socinian tendency to his incarnational theology. The allegation that DuBose's Christology tends towards pantheism may stem from the divine self-communication and mutual fulfillment that characterizes his doctrine of the Incarnation. However, as seen in Dorner's work, the aseity of the divine (an attribute that rests in God as Trinity and so can never be true of human beings) balances divine self-communication with divine self-preservation, preventing a lapse into pantheism.

27. DuBose, *Ecumenical Councils*, 336.

28. DuBose, *Ecumenical Councils*, 330.

The Deification of Christ's Humanity

DuBose's incarnational theology results in the deification of Christ's humanity – an outcome Hall associates with kenotic Christologies.²⁹ Throughout DuBose's work, the language of deification is prominent, despite DuBose's claim that the two natures are not changed into one another:

In our Lord as He is now, in His exaltation; where the Incarnation in Him is wholly completed; where the divine is wholly communicated, and the human wholly assumed, i.e. taken up into and glorified and deified by the divine; in other words, where the two natures, without being changed into each other, are become *One*, we can only describe the personality as a divine-human one.

But as we are studying our Lord's humanity now not as it has become one, and the co-equal partner, with His divinity, but, as we may say, in the *process* of its becoming or being made so.³⁰

As fellowship with God is the end for which humanity was created, deification is the intentional outcome of DuBose's personalistic, incarnational theology and not merely the unintended consequence of a kenotic theology. God's self-communication and humanity's appropriation of this gift of divine love does not violate the integrity of the human nature. Moreover, according to DuBose, we receive God only to the extent that we ourselves participate in God, as DuBose explains: "It is infinitely more to [God] that we should serve than that He Himself should be served. He can dispense with our service, but it is our breath and life: only in it have we Him; only in doing His work of love are we sharing His life of love, and enjoying the blessedness of it."³¹ Deification, as understood by DuBose, is inseparably linked to our sanctification.

29. Hall, *The Kenotic Theory*, 153.

30. DuBose, *The Soteriology of the New Testament*, 139.

31. DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, 121.

An Unfounded Allegation

Hall chooses passages from DuBose's work to illustrate various arguments used by Kenoticists, and he does so sometimes without examining the larger context of the passage or the complete theology of DuBose. The features of his theology that resonate with Kenoticism result from DuBose's embrace of Personalism – the emphasis on spiritual qualities, a progressive incarnation that respects human volition and personhood, an incarnation that requires subjective appropriation on the part of Christ's humanity (and, therefore, the mediation of the Holy Spirit), a spiritual union that is the fulfillment of human nature and God's fulfillment as love, and a participation in God in which the spiritual nature of both humanity and divinity serve as the meeting place. Although both Dorner and DuBose embrace a personalistic theology, Dorner seems to do so primarily for the freedom afforded the human-divine relationship, a central quality for an evangelical faith. DuBose, on the other hand, seems grounded in Personalism as a philosophical and theological movement.

However, one loose end in DuBose's theology requires investigation before Hall's accusation that DuBose is a Kenoticist can be deemed unfounded. If, as DuBose contends, the Logos *becomes* human, what implications does this have for the immanent Trinity? Was the Second Person of the Trinity absent from the immanent Trinity throughout the lifetime of Jesus? Or were there two centers of consciousness of the Logos after the tradition of Hans Lassen Martensen?³² A closer look at Dorner's own theology,

32. Brown, 55-62.

especially his work on divine immutability and the ethical Trinity, may hold the answer.

God as Supreme Personality is composed of three modes of Being (not Persons):

...it is requisite to know that these three modes of the divine Being do not become extinct in their product, the divine Personality, but they endure, in such a way indeed that God can reveal Himself in the world according to each of the three modes of Being, and that in each of them God knows Himself and wills Himself according to its distinction from the other modes, that in each of them He exists as a person and not merely as a power. The eternal result of the trinitarian process is the eternal presence of the divine Personality in different modes of Being.³³

An ethical personality requires both ethical necessity and freedom; the second mode of being (the Son or Logos) is the principle of freedom within the divine Personality, the mode associated with creation and historical activity. The Logos is Love in the mode of freedom, the manifestation of which is “distinction without disjunction within the Godhead.”³⁴ Therefore, when the Logos becomes a human being, it is acting in a manner consistent with its mode of being within God’s own life and remains part of the eternal, divine Personality. Although DuBose does not articulate a detailed doctrine of the Trinity, he does speak of *modes of divine being* – not only in terms of the Logos becoming a human being but also in terms of the pre-existent Logos.³⁵ DuBose uses this language in various writings; therefore, it is reasonable to postulate a similar understanding of divine Personality and the role of the Logos as that articulated by Dorner.

33. Dorner, *System of Christian Doctrine* 1, 449.

34. Jonathan Norgate, *Isaak A. Dorner: The Triune God and the Gospel of Salvation* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 157.

35. DuBose, *The Soteriology of the New Testament*, 138.

Interestingly, Hall does not seem to recognize that DuBose, like Dorner, espouses a progressive incarnation. Instead, as we have seen in *The Kenotic Theory* (1898), DuBose's incarnational theology is used by Hall to demonstrate certain aspects of a kenotic Christology. However, when Hall writes *The Incarnation* (the sixth in a ten-volume set on Dogmatic Theology) seventeen years later, Gore's work on Christology continues to be used liberally to demonstrate the pitfalls of Kenoticism, while DuBose is mentioned as a kenotic writer in only one footnote.³⁶ Although DuBose is once again not listed as a proponent of a progressive incarnation, perhaps in the intervening seven years Hall had begun to rethink his categorization of DuBose as kenotic. Having demonstrated that DuBose's Christology does not meet the criteria required to be categorized as part of Kenoticism, we now turn to final reflections on DuBose's driving motivation and the relevance of his theology for today.

36. Hall. *The Incarnation*, 203.

Conclusion

The Christology of William Porcher DuBose, characterized by a personalistic and progressive Incarnation, results in several features similar to those of kenotic Christologies. Despite being categorized as a Kenoticist by Francis J. Hall, DuBose's incarnational theology does not qualify as a kenotic Christology given that the Logos never abandons or temporarily suspends any of its qualities. However, DuBose and the Kenoticists do share a common desire – that the divine-human unity in Christ represents a true participation of each nature in the other. DuBose holds in common with Hall an aversion to the abandonment or suspension by the Logos of any divine attributes during the Incarnation. By locating the Incarnation on the plane of personality and grounding it in the human need for God, I contend that DuBose (and Dorner) successfully articulates a constructive explanation of the relationship between the two natures in Christ – one that allows true sharing between the natures but avoids any metaphysical kenosis on the part of the Logos.¹ In so doing, DuBose adds his name to the line of Christian mystics that stretches throughout the history of the Church.

J. R. Illingworth, an Anglican theologian who also espoused a personalistic and gradual account of the Incarnation, wrote the following of a “thought” underlying the theology of Martin Luther:

That thought was the natural affinity of the human soul, through all its sin, for God; and of God for the human soul; and the consequent possibility of an

1. Norgate writes that “Dorner is seeking to furnish the ecclesial dogma of Christ with a configuration that offers the grounds for a *positive* account of the relation between the two natures, which he argues has been scarcely displayed in the history of the doctrine.” Jonathan Norgate, *Isaak A. Dorner: The Triune God and the Gospel of Salvation* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 157-158.

immediate relation between the two. He turned, as Dorner puts it, from the metaphysical to the moral attributes of God and man, culminating as they do in love; and proclaimed that here was the only ground for an intimate and in a measure intelligible union of the two. For it is the nature of a God whose essence is love to communicate Himself, and the nature of a man whose essence is the desire for love to be receptive of that communication (*capax deitatis*).²

Illingworth could just as easily have written these words about DuBose. To what extent DuBose's emphasis on a personal, divine-human relationship is rooted in his own conversion experience is unknown, although this experience would stay with him his entire life.³ Authentic mystical experiences, however, find their counterpart in acts of love and justice.

The beautiful, mystical theology of DuBose masks a more sinister reality, that of an early life lived on plantations dependent on the labor of enslaved persons and an adulthood lived in the post-Reconstruction, Jim Crow South. DuBose was far more than a mere disinterested bystander in the world of the Confederacy. He attended the signing of the Ordinance of Secession in Charleston, South Carolina, on December 20, 1860; he promenaded along Charleston's Battery Park hoping to observe the attack on Fort

2. J. R. Illingworth, *Personality Human and Divine: Being the Bampton Lectures For the Year 1894* (New York: MacMillan and Co., 1898) 17-18. Dorner also notes this same resonance of Luther's theology with German mysticism. *System of Christian Doctrine* 3, 224-225.

3. DuBose writes of a spiritual experience that occurred while he was a student at the Citadel: "I leapt to my feet trembling, and then that happened which I can only describe by saying that a light shone about me and a Presence filled the room. At the same time an effable joy and peace took possession of me which it is impossible either to express or explain. I continued I do not know how long, perfectly conscious of, simply but intensely feeling, the Presence, and fearful, by any movement, of breaking the spell." William Porcher DuBose, *Turning Points in My Life* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912), 18-19.

Sumpter that occurred in the early morning hours of April 12, 1861.⁴ Although originally planning to remain in seminary through the war, a letter from his father prompted DuBose to join the Confederate Army. For the next four years, DuBose participated in active combat as far north as Delaware; he was captured and then released as part of a prisoner exchange; and he was wounded in battle several times before being commissioned as an army chaplain in 1863. DuBose would remain in that position until the end of the war.⁵

DuBose would rethink the institution of slavery decades after the war, but not the right of the South to secede. In a letter to a friend in 1898, DuBose stated that because the North was not abiding by the Constitution (but wanted instead to substitute a “higher law”), the South was justified in its desire to form a new nation. He writes: “No one questions now that slavery had to be abolished, but in the immediate quarrel the South was legally and constitutionally right, and the method and spirit of the North forced the manhood of the South into the cause it pursued, and rendered any other impossible for it with self-respect.”⁶ This is far from a full-scale denouncement of slavery, or humble contrition for a past wrongdoing .

4. W. Eric Emerson, and Karen Stokes, ed. *Faith, Valor, and Devotion: The Civil War Letters of William Porcher DuBose* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), xvi-xvii.

5. Emerson and Stokes, xvii-xxvi.

6. Quoted in Karen Stokes, “William Porcher DuBose: Theologian, Soldier, Saint,” *The Imaginative Conservative*, January 7, 2017, accessed January 30, 2021, <https://theimaginativeconservative.org/2017/01/william-porcher-dubose-karen-stokes.html>.

Moreover, DuBose would continue to find in slavery a genteel beauty that is beyond a twenty-first century understanding. In an article published in *The Sewanee Review* at the 1902 death of Senator Wade Hampton, DuBose wrote nostalgically of the institution of slavery: “The slavery – or slaveholding on a large scale – which, judged by its best fruits, is thus so fully able to justify itself, was no sin to those who engaged in it. ... The South received and exercised slavery in good faith and without doubt or question, and, whatever we pronounce it now, it was not sin at that time to those people. Liable to many abuses and evils, it could also be the nurse of many great and beautiful virtues.”⁷ In addition to a romantic view of slavery, DuBose also perpetuated a White Supremacist account of Reconstruction, seeing the backlash of white Southerners as inevitable and rooted in a justifiable sentiment (even if some expressions of that sentiment lacked moral integrity).⁸ A full understanding of the oppressive reality of slavery never made it to his pen, nor likely to his consciousness.

Any search for a place where DuBose’s work has theological and social relevance in today’s world first requires us to grapple with the intersection between slavery and his theology. How could DuBose embrace Personalism with its emphasis on human dignity,

7. William Porcher DuBose, “Wade Hampton,” *The Sewanee Review* 10, no.4 (January 1902) 364-365.

8. DuBose described the backlash of white Southerners as oil surfacing when mixed with water, and formerly enslaved persons as lacking agency: “Any one on the ground could not but have recognized the fact that it was a condition in which natural forces were going to act in spite of moral considerations, and were not to be regulated or controlled by them. Put oil under water, and (right or wrong) it will come to the top. Put such people as the whites of any of our States as much under and as much at the mercy of not merely their late slaves, but their late slaves manipulated in mass by the leaders and for the ends that then prevailed, as was the case in the South in 1876, and what is the use of asking whether they *ought* to have remained at the bottom?” DuBose, “Wade Hampton,” 366-367.

freedom, and self-determination, and yet remain unconverted in his views on slavery? To separate self-determination in daily life from that inherent in religious devotion is inconsistent with his theology, as it is through daily life that we are made holy and participate in God:

It is not in being holy outside of and apart from our bodies and bodily lives that we are spiritual men; it is only by becoming holy in and through these that we act by act and step by step become spiritual men. Our bodies, parts and passions are still the stuff out of which we shape and fashion ourselves. Saints and sinners are made, by opposite processes out of the same material.⁹

In his theology, DuBose does not focus on a spiritual future unrelated to our earthly lives. This disparity between his personalistic theology and his ambivalence toward the institution of slavery is underscored by subsequent history; for from the branches of Personalism, with its emphasis on the intrinsic value of all persons, grew not only the unrepentant former Confederate soldier and chaplain, but also the civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr.¹⁰

There is evidence that DuBose did, at least theoretically, understand the brokenness that systemic sin imposes on us, as illustrated in this passage:

We might say that there is no such thing as a past sin. Sins are never past; they are forever present in us in what we are by consequence of them, in our own further separation from God, and increased inability to obey His law and realize His righteousness. We *do* need to be saved from all our past sins and from the sins of our fathers, the consequences of which we inherit and the burden of which we still

9. DuBose, *The Reason of Life*, 266.

10. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote of Personalism: “Personalism’s insistence that only personality – finite and infinite – is ultimately real strengthened me in two convictions: it gave me metaphysical and philosophical grounding for the idea of a personal God, and it gave me the metaphysical basis for the dignity and worth of all human personality.” Quoted in Leo Sandon, “Boston University Personalism and Southern Baptist Theology,” *Foundations* 20, no. 2 (April-June 1977) 106.

bear. But our Salvation consists *not* in some one's performing a vicarious act or enduring a vicarious penalty which has the effect of a formal objective satisfaction to the nature, the justice, or the divine government of God for their moral or abstract guilt; *but* it consists in some one's doing, or having done, for us and in us that which will break the power over us of the inherited nature, of the accumulated and consolidated consequences in our nature, which those sins have entailed upon us.¹¹

For all the allegations that DuBose stressed the humanity of Christ to an almost Pelagian extent, his Christology is rooted in the divine initiative and inseparable from soteriology. Mindful of human fallibility, DuBose does not presume to have the final word on matters of faith and theology but offers his work to the Church so that it may be tested against collective experience and the truth of Scripture.

I offer all I shall have to say to the furtherance of the common cause of Christian unity, subject to correction by the higher truth of the Scriptures and the larger wisdom of the Church.¹²

May the corrective influence of this higher truth extend to the racial injustice that still permeates our world, that through repentance and restitution the burden of race-related sin we pass to the next generation might be less than that which we received.

11. DuBose, *Soteriology of the New Testament*, 239.

12. DuBose, *The Gospel According to Saint Paul*, 14.

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