

Jacques Dupuis and Chalcedon

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Abstract

This article reexamines Jacques Dupuis's distinction between the action of the Word as such and the action of the Word incarnate. Against recent critics, I argue that Dupuis's Christology is compatible with Chalcedon as interpreted by Leo the Great. I suggest ways in which this Leonine christological approach needs corrective amplification, particularly regarding the unity of Christ and the action of Christ in his risen humanity.

Keywords

Chalcedon, Christology, Jacques Dupuis, Leo I, Logos, Maximus the Confessor, religious pluralism

Introduction

In the decade before his death in 2004, Jacques Dupuis developed a carefully nuanced position on the saving significance of Jesus Christ in light of the lived reality of religious diversity. What does it mean, Dupuis asked, to speak of Jesus of Nazareth as the unique and unsurpassable revelation of God while acknowledging that the vast majority of the human race, throughout history and today, has no explicit connection to Christian faith? While Dupuis distanced himself from pluralist positions that severed strong allegiances to Nicaea and Chalcedon, his Christology nonetheless drew significant criticism and a controversial investigation by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Since his death, despite some sympathetic commentaries, Dupuis has come in for renewed criticism in some recent christological studies. For Dupuis's sharpest critics, his Christology

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runs afoul of Chalcedonian dogma, particularly with regard to his distinction between the salvific operation of the Word “as such” and of the Word incarnate. Against these charges, I want to show how Dupuis is indeed a Chalcedonian theologian, but a Chalcedonian theologian of a certain kind. Dupuis is heir to a Western reading of Chalcedon stemming from Pope Leo I. Some of the ambiguities in Dupuis’s Christology, particularly in the Word-as-such–Word incarnate distinction, arise from how he reads Chalcedon through this Leonine lens. Finally, I suggest that two important aspects of the christological tradition, the theandric unity of Christ and the eschatological recapitulation of creation by the risen Christ, merit stronger emphasis, without detriment to Dupuis’s concern for the diversity of divine action within a religiously plural world.

Dupuis’s Christology and the Logos as-Such–Incarnate Distinction

Dupuis outlined his Christology in light of religious pluralism in two major books, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (1997) and *Christianity and the Religions* (2001), as well as numerous articles and responses to reviews.¹ Dupuis’s inductive starting point is the lived reality of religious pluralism, and within this context he asks how the affirmation of the uniqueness and universality of saving revelation in Jesus Christ might be reframed. Moving beyond exclusivist and pluralist paradigms, Dupuis elaborates a trinitarian Christology in which Jesus Christ is universally constitutive of salvation, while there remains a wider economy of the triune God working throughout human history. Beyond (but not separable from) the historical Christ-event, the Word and the Spirit of God are universally present and active.² Dupuis thus affirms a single saving economy, but argues that God’s self-communication can occur in diverse modalities, grounded in the distinctions of the trinitarian persons and missions.³ These modalities of the Word’s and Spirit’s actions are not limited to individuals, but render religious traditions beyond Christianity “mediations of salvation.”⁴ Dupuis thus attempts to step beyond inclusivist models in which non-Christian religious traditions are regarded as provisional stepping stones to fulfilment in Christianity. Grounded in the trinitarian rhythm of God’s self-revelation, Christian theology can affirm a positive role for non-Christian religions within God’s universal saving plan, and can thus affirm religious pluralism *de jure*, not simply *de facto*.

Within this salvific economy, Jesus is the unsurpassable embodiment of God’s universal saving will, but Dupuis underlines the historical limitations necessarily entailed

1. *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997); *Christianity and the Religions: From Confrontation to Dialogue*, trans. Phillip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002). Among articles, see especially “‘The Truth Shall Make You Free’: The Theology of Religious Pluralism Revisited,” *Louvain Studies* 24 (1999): 211–63, <https://doi.org/10.2143/lst.24.3.542145>.

2. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 221–23, 316–21.

3. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 212.

4. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 316–21.

in the Christ-event. The fullness of revelation in Jesus is not “quantitative” but “qualitative,” a fullness of “intensity.”⁵ Jesus cannot be *absolute* Savior, since “absolute” can only strictly be predicated of the divine reality in itself, not of any finite reality, even God’s self-revelation in the human figure of Jesus.⁶ Revelation in and through Jesus’ human existence is necessarily limited, even “incomplete and imperfect.”⁷ It is limited because the human consciousness of Jesus, *qua* human, was limited, and because Christ’s human life and career were historically particular:

The historical particularity of Jesus imposes upon the Christ-event irremediable limitations. This is necessarily part of the incarnational economy willed by God. Just as the human consciousness of Jesus as Son could not, by nature, exhaust the mystery of God, and therefore left his revelation of God incomplete, in like manner neither does or can the Christ-event exhaust God’s saving power. God remains beyond the man Jesus as the ultimate source of both revelation and salvation. Jesus’ revelation of God is a human transposition of God’s mystery; his salvific action is the channel, the efficacious sign or sacrament, of God’s salvific will. The personal identity of Jesus as Son of God in his human existence notwithstanding, a distance continues to exist between God (the Father), the ultimate source, and he who is God’s human icon. Jesus is no substitute for God.⁸

Here, Dupuis invokes the principle of sacramentality, such that Jesus’ human existence and consciousness are the efficacious sign and instrument of his personal unity with the Father and of God’s universal saving work. Jesus is, therefore, not merely one among many mediators. At the same time, if we are to take both the transcendence of God and the humanity of Jesus seriously, the mystery of God always exceeds even its unsurpassable sacramental transposition in Christ.

In order to speak of the distinction between God’s saving action in Jesus and the universal saving action of the Word of God, Dupuis distinguishes between the *Logos ensarkos* and the *Logos asarkos*. Just as prior to the Incarnation the Word acted in creation and in the enlightenment of human beings (John 1:9), such a distinct action of the Word continues after the Incarnation, “not, to be sure, as constituting a distinct economy of salvation, parallel to that realized in the flesh of Christ, but as the expression of God’s superabundant graciousness and absolute freedom.”⁹ Dupuis thus extrapolates from patristic Logos-theologies: while Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria understood the creative and illuminating operations of the Logos as propaedeutic to the Incarnation of the whole Logos, Dupuis sees no compelling reason that the universal operations of the Logos should be abrogated by the Incarnation. Thus, “The Logos of God has sown his seeds through the entire history of humanity and continues today to sow them outside the Christian tradition.”¹⁰ The

5. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 249.

6. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 282.

7. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 271.

8. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 298.

9. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 299.

10. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 156.

saving revelation of the *Logos asarkos* constitutes an enduring dimension of the divine economy.

Dupuis repeatedly insists that he is proposing a distinction between *actions* of the Logos as incarnate and as non-incarnate, not a bifurcation of the person of the Word or of the one divine economy. In *Christianity and the Religions*, Dupuis ceases to refer to the *Logos asarkos* and *ensarkos*. Recognizing that *Logos asarkos* and *ensarkos* could be interpreted to suggest two distinct subjects, two *logoi*, he speaks instead of “the Word as such” and the Word incarnate.¹¹ His point remains, however, that there is a wider scope of the economy, of the Word as such together with the Spirit, that allows for a positive salvific and revelatory role of non-Christian religions, and that cannot be limited to the work of the Word as incarnate or to the direct mediation of the church.

A Bifurcated Christology?

On various counts Dupuis’s Christology provoked criticism from academic theological and ecclesiastical quarters. The editorial board of *Revue Thomiste* attributed to Dupuis “a deficient conception of the hypostatic union.”¹² Gavin D’Costa warned that “Dupuis’s constitutive Christ is in danger of being reduced to the early historical figure of Jesus.”¹³ The investigation of Dupuis by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) is well known and documented.¹⁴ Although not named explicitly, Dupuis seems to be implicated in the CDF’s 2000 declaration, *Dominus Iesus*:

Furthermore, to justify the universality of Christian salvation as well as the fact of religious pluralism, it has been proposed that there is an economy of the eternal Word that is valid also outside the Church and is unrelated to her, in addition to an economy of the incarnate Word ... These theses are in profound conflict with the Christian faith.¹⁵

The *Notification* on Dupuis’s *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, published by the CDF a few months after *Dominus Iesus*, echoes the declaration in slightly different wording:

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11. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 140.
 12. Editorial board, *Revue thomiste*, “‘Tout récapituler dans le Christ’: À propos de l’ouvrage de J. Dupuis, *Vers une théologie chrétienne du pluralisme religieux*,” *Revue Thomiste* 98 (1998): 591–630 at 602.
 13. Gavin D’Costa, review of *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, *Journal of Theological Studies* 49 (1998): 910–14 at 913, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/49.2.910>.
 14. See William R. Burrows, ed., *Jacques Dupuis Faces the Inquisition: Two Essays by Jacques Dupuis on Dominus Iesus and the Roman Investigation of His Work* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012); Gerard O’Connell, *Do Not Stifle the Spirit: Conversations with Jacques Dupuis* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2017).
 15. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus*, 9–10, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html.

It is therefore contrary to the Catholic faith not only to posit a separation between the Word and Jesus, or between the Word's salvific activity and that of Jesus, but also to maintain that there is a salvific activity of the Word as such in his divinity, independent of the humanity of the Incarnate Word.¹⁶

The critical reviews of Dupuis's Christology raised concerns about a latent if not explicit Nestorianism, a separation of subjects in Christ between the man Jesus and the divine Logos.

Such criticisms are echoed more recently by Thomas Joseph White. White associates Dupuis with wider Nestorianizing trends in modern Christology: "In the later work of Jacques Dupuis one finds Rahnerian christological themes recast overtly in ways that resemble the proposals of Schleiermacher and Hick."¹⁷ As in Schleiermacher and Hick, White spies in Dupuis the replacement of a robustly ontological union in Christ with an event of consciousness. White argues that by making the consciousness of Christ the "primary locus of God's self-revelation in Jesus," Dupuis has made the habitual grace bestowed on Christ's humanity "the ground for the articulation of the hypostatic union."¹⁸ According to White, when Dupuis refers to the "human existence" of the Son of God, he implies that there are two existences (*esse*) and thus two existents (*supposita*) in Christ.¹⁹ The union of the Logos and "the man Jesus" (White's words) "is located in the consciousness of Christ, and occurs through a kind of accidental union."²⁰ Finally, addressing Dupuis's *Logos asarkos*–*ensarkos* distinction, White argues that by positing a distinct action of the *Logos asarkos* Dupuis fails to acknowledge that all sanctifying grace is instrumentally mediated by Christ's humanity.²¹ Instead, White charges, when the Logos acts *asarkos*, it cannot then be the same subject who is *ensarkos*. Dupuis's language is thus "unambiguously Nestorian," because it "necessarily implies a dual-subject Christology" in which Christ's humanity is "substantially distinct from the Logos."²²

For critics such as White, Dupuis becomes a kind of straw man to highlight contrasting theological projects.²³ White reads Dupuis selectively, such that what we are

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16. *Notification on the Book Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism (Orbis Books: Maryknoll, New York, 1997) by Fr. Jacques Dupuis, SJ, I.2*, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20010124_dupuis_en.html.
 17. Thomas Joseph White, *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2015), 104–105. See also White's more recent "The Universal Mediation of Christ and Non-Christian Religions," *Nova et Vetera* (English edition) 14 (2016): 177–98, at 183, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nov.2016.0011>.
 18. White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 105.
 19. White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 105.
 20. White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 105–106.
 21. White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 106.
 22. White, *The Incarnate Lord*, 106–107.
 23. For similar critiques of Dupuis, see Keith Johnson, *Rethinking the Trinity and Religious Pluralism: An Augustinian Assessment* (Downers Gove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), especially 126–35.

left with verges on caricature. For instance, White claims that Dupuis's stress on the limitations of Christ's human consciousness entails an accidental union with God by consciousness and grace, not an ontological, hypostatic union. But the limited *mediation* of divine self-revelation in Christ (Dupuis's claim) is different from an accidental or external *ground* of union between Christ and the Father (White's charge): the latter does not follow necessarily from the former. White claims that Dupuis's references to the "human existence" of the Son of God imply two acts of being (*esse*) and two *supposita*. Surely this is a narrow, univocal reading of Dupuis's narrative language, overdetermined by Scholastic categories. White's criticisms of Dupuis lose a good deal of their force because they fail to examine Dupuis's overall project and to make the linguistic distinctions he is making—that is, to recognize analogical rather than univocal discourse and to allow for christological distinctions that are not separations. White also only cites *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, and not Dupuis's subsequent writings: thus he does not take into consideration Dupuis's insistence on a distinction of operations of the Word, not a separation of subjects. A more helpful way forward, it seems to me, is to take seriously Dupuis's appeals to the christological tradition anchored in Chalcedon. Setting aside such misconstruals of Dupuis's Christology allows for a more precise taxonomy of the contributions, as well as the potential ambiguities, in Dupuis's proposal.

Dupuis and Chalcedon

Responding to the initial criticisms of *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, in his later articles and in *Christianity and the Religions* Dupuis situated his christological proposals more explicitly within the trajectory of conciliar Christology. Dupuis acknowledges the unity of Christ's person: "[T]he constitutive uniqueness of Jesus Christ as universal Saviour must be made to rest on his personal identity as the Son of God."²⁴ But he highlights the abiding distinction of the two natures of Christ, invoking Chalcedon's negative adverbs, "without confusion" (*asynchytōs*) and "without change" (*atreptōs*).²⁵ The distinction of natures, he notes, was extended to apply also to the operations of Christ, as affirmed by the Third Council of Constantinople in 680.²⁶ Without such an abiding distinction between the natures and operations in Christ,

24. Dupuis, "Trinitarian Christology as a Model for a Theology of Religious Pluralism," in *The Myriad Christ: Plurality and the Quest for Unity in Contemporary Christology*, ed. Terrence Merrigan and Jacques Haers (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 83–97 at 89. Elsewhere, Dupuis is critical of Aloysius Pieris for separating Christ from the Word, rendering the former epiphenomenal to the saving operations of the Word proper: see "Universality of the Word and the Particularity of Jesus Christ," in *The Convergence of Theology: A Festschrift Honoring Gerald O'Collins, SJ*, ed. Daniel Kendall and Stephen T. Davis (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2001), 320–54 at 326.

25. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 144.

26. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 144. See Gerald O'Collins, "Christ and the Religions," *Gregorianum* 84 (2003): 347–62 at 358–60.

Dupuis warns of an “inverted monophysitism” which reduces the divine nature to the human.²⁷ The distinction between the actions of the Word as incarnate and of the Word as such is therefore a necessary means of maintaining divine transcendence: “the Word of God, as incarnate, remains the Word of God; God remains God.”²⁸ Dupuis thus posits a distinct continuing action of the Logos “as such” not solely on the grounds that it opens up the possibility of modes of revelation and salvation beyond explicit Christian faith, but also as an exigency of the christological tradition anchored in Chalcedon.

In his reading of Chalcedon Dupuis is adverting to important boundaries of orthodox Christology, and he rightly underscores the transcendence of the triune God. As profoundly involved as God has become in creation, preeminently in the Incarnation, God is not thereby limited, and God’s universal creative and redemptive action *ab initio* is not suppressed by the Incarnation. Gerald O’Collins has noted that Dupuis’s distinction echoes Aquinas’s employment of reduplicative statements to distinguish what Christ does as divine and as human, and argues that such distinctions are necessary in order to avoid the problematic claim that the Word is necessarily and by definition incarnate.²⁹ One does indeed find such injudicious language among some of Dupuis’s critics. Paolo Gamberini, for instance, speaks of Christ crucified as “the adequate predicate of the eternal God”:

Jesus Christ belongs to the eternal substance of God. If Jesus of Nazareth belongs to the being of God as the predicate belongs to the subject, this means that within this essential and original relation divinity and humanity do not negate each other reciprocally (*contradidunt*) but rather affirm one another.³⁰

In attempting to affirm the unity of Christ, Gamberini uses language that suggests a union at the level of natures, and thus oversteps the distinction between the eternal triune life and the creaturely, historical reality of Jesus’ humanity. Such language only reinforces the importance of Dupuis’s emphasis on abiding, unconfused christological distinction.

Thus Dupuis sees himself as affirming something vital to Chalcedonian doctrine. He reads the historical development of christological doctrine dialectically, and thus sees a need to stress counterbalancing poles within a range of orthodox christological options. For instance, while affirming John Paul II’s insistence in *Redemptoris Missio* on the non-separability of the Word and Jesus Christ and on the indivisibility of Christ’s person, Dupuis comments, “This is the faith, as expressed in the classical christological dogma, but it represents but one aspect of that faith.”³¹ Reflecting on the

27. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 144; “Universality of the Word,” 333.

28. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 144.

29. “Jacques Dupuis and Religious Pluralism,” in *Christology: Origins, Developments, Debates* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2015), 120–21.

30. Paolo Gamberini, “La Cristologia del pluralismo religioso in un recente libro di Jacques Dupuis,” *Filosofia e Teologia* 14 (2000): 141. My translation.

31. Dupuis, “Universality of the Word,” 332; see John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (December 7, 1990), 6, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html (hereafter *RM*).

significance of Chalcedon for theology today, Dupuis states, “[The actuality of Chalcedon] consists in helping to maintain, against the ever actual danger of monophysitism, the truth and reality of Jesus’s humanity in its state of union with the Son of God. No matter how closely related he has become to God, Jesus Christ is neither absorbed nor suppressed.”³² For Dupuis, the christological councils can be read as pendulum-swings between the poles of unity and distinction in Christology, with Chalcedon coming down firmly on the side of distinction.³³ Thus Dupuis understands himself as Chalcedonian in precisely this sense of highlighting the abiding distinction of natures in Christ. Within the Alexandrian-Antiochene schema into which Chalcedon is so often slotted, Dupuis sympathizes most with Antiochene sensibilities. As Thomas Hughson writes, “Neither Rahner nor most modern theology that respects and develops classical Christology has addressed the specific implication of the Antiochene two-natures truth taught by Chalcedon. Jacques Dupuis is the exception.”³⁴

But the more direct source for Dupuis than Antiochene Christology is the Christology of Leo the Great. Leo is the christological writer Dupuis cites most often when invoking conciliar teaching. Leo is, for Dupuis, the authoritative interpreter of Chalcedon. Leo’s *Tome to Flavian*, received by Chalcedon, contains the famous phrase distinguishing the natures as well as their proper activities: *agit enim utraque forma alterius communione quod proprium est*.³⁵ This Leonine interpretation of Chalcedon funds Dupuis’s suspicion of the unitive Christology of Cyril of Alexandria and of later Cyrillian “Neo-Chalcedonian” Christology. Thus, while Dupuis cites Chalcedon and Constantinople III, he downplays the theological and dogmatic significance of the more unitive Christology of Constantinople II (553):

Apart from the very doubtful dogmatic value of canons 1 to 10 of Constantinople II which lacked papal approbation, it is well known that some of those canons embody a tendency to return to some extremist expressions used in an Alexandrian way by Saint Cyril himself, such as for instance the expression: *mia physis to (sic) logou sesarkomenè (sic)*.³⁶

32. Dupuis, *Who Do You Say I Am? An Introduction to Christology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 95.

33. Dupuis, *Who Do You Say I Am?* 96–97.

34. *Connecting Jesus and Social Justice: Classical Christology and Public Theology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 177. Recent studies of the fifth-century christological controversy have questioned the picture of two unified, equally weighted “schools” leading up to Chalcedon, Antioch, and Alexandria: see Richard Price and Michael Gaddis, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University, 2005), vol. 1, 65–66; André de Halleux, “La définition christologique à Chalcedoine (Première partie)” *Revue théologique de Louvain* 7 (1976): 3–23, <https://doi.org/10.3406/thlou.1976.1453>; André de Halleux, “La définition christologique à Chalcedoine (suite),” *Revue théologique de Louvain* 7 (1976): 155–70, <https://doi.org/10.3406/thlou.1976.1473>.

35. Leo, *Tome to Flavian*, in Norman P. Tanner, ed., *The Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1 (London: Sheed & Ward / Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, 1990), 79. See also Dupuis, “Universality of the Word,” 333.

36. Dupuis, “The Word and the Christ,” in *Encounters with the Word: Essays to Honour Aloysius Pieris*, ed. Robert Cruz, Marshal Fernando, and Asanga Tilakaratne (Colombo: Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue, 2004), 179–94 at 183.

“It is the Council of Chalcedon,” concludes Dupuis, “not Constantinople II, that most authoritatively represents the Church’s christological faith.”³⁷ Dupuis is wary of appeals to the *communicatio idiomatum*, which rather than affirming the personal unity of Christ risk becoming a loose transfer of the divine attributes to Jesus in his humanity.³⁸ He registers similar reservations regarding the *theandric action* of Christ: “Pace John of Damascus . . . this usage is foreign to the christological councils which spoke in a constant manner of two distinct actions of two natures acting in ‘communion’.”³⁹ According to Dupuis, one can legitimately speak of Jesus Christ as “one theandric person” given that the person is the divine Word who has assumed a human nature, and not a human being deified by union with the divine nature. But “it is ambiguous to speak of one theandric action of Jesus Christ as if the action of the Word of God resulted from its union with the humanity of Christ and was inconceivable outside of it.”⁴⁰ Dupuis’s summary demotion of certain post-Chalcedonian developments such as “theandric person/action,” is debatable, but his underlying concern is substantive—that while such expressions of the unity of Christ’s person and work are legitimate products of late patristic Christology, they are also often subject to misinterpretation that tilts toward inverse monophysitism, the constriction of the eternal Logos to the confines of the historical humanity of Christ.

A One-Sided Chalcedonianism?

Dupuis thus stands within a specific, Western tradition of interpretation of Chalcedonian doctrine. He takes up the language of this tradition, but also its limitations, for instance regarding the Leonine language of “communion.” “Communion,” Dupuis notes, is used by Leo analogically, not referring to a communion of persons (as in the life of the Trinity or in ecclesial community) but to the operations proper to each nature within the hypostatic union:

Without doubt, all the human actions of Jesus are the human actions of the person of the Word; the Word is personally the agent or the acting subject; but the human actions of Jesus are not all the expression of a divine power working through them, and for which the human nature serves as “conjoint instrument” (*instrumentum coniunctum*). The same instrumental value of the human actions of Jesus in relation to divine action is at work everywhere that a divine power of salvation expresses itself through the will, the words and the acts of Jesus, as is the case with the healing miracles. In such circumstances, a much deeper (analogical) “communion” of the two natures comes to light than in the case of the ordinary, simply

37. Dupuis, “The Word and the Christ,” 184.

38. Dupuis, “The Word and the Christ,” 333. See also “‘Christianity and the Religions’ Revisited,” *Louvain Studies* 28 (2003): 373, <https://doi.org/10.2143/lis.28.4.504573>.

39. Dupuis, “Le Verbe de Dieu comme tel et comme incarné,” in *Was den Glauben in Bewegung bringt: Fundamentaltheologie in der Spur Jesu Christi*, ed. Andreas R. Batlogg, Mariano Delgado, and Roman A. Siebenrock (Freiburg: Herder, 2004), 500–16 at 506–507. My translation.

40. Dupuis, “Le Verbe de Dieu comme tel et comme incarné,” 507. My translation.

human actions of Jesus: Jesus walks, sleeps, eats and so on—even though these purely human actions also belong personally to the Word who is the subject or agent.⁴¹

Without positing a dual-subject Christology, Dupuis argues that there are differing modes or degrees of communion between the human actions of Jesus and divine action. Even in the pre-paschal, historical existence of Jesus, it is possible to distinguish between those acts that (although belonging to the divine Word) are “purely human” acts and those human acts through which divine power shines through more clearly. But given Dupuis’s marginalization of theandricism and his parsing of degrees of communion between human and divine action in Christ, the concern arises that he has given an overly parallelist account of the incarnate work of Christ, one that formally recognizes the hypostatic unity of Christ but takes the natures to be the original—and always distinct—principles of action in Christ. This emphasis on natures over hypostasis is not unique to Dupuis: it is a problematic aspect identified by even sympathetic readers of Leo’s Christology.⁴²

In the same vein, Dupuis appeals to Leo’s Sermon 64. Leo affirms that the two natures in the one person of Christ “have common actions” (*utraque essentia communes habeat actiones*), but also that the proper quality of the actions must be kept in mind (*intelligendae tamen sunt ipsorum operum qualitates*). One must contemplate “what the flesh does not do without the Word, and what the Word does not do without the flesh” (*quid sit quod caro sine Verbo non agit, et quid sit quod Verbum sine carne non efficit*).⁴³ Here, Leo is describing the abasement of the Word and the elevation of humanity. Leo gives various examples: the virginal conception would not have occurred “without the Word,” while without the flesh Jesus would not have been swaddled as an infant; without the Word Jesus would not have healed the weak and raised the dead, while without the flesh he would not have taken food to end his fast or felt the need for sleep; without the Word Jesus could not have claimed equality with the Father, while without the flesh he would not have claimed that the Father was greater.⁴⁴ As in his *Tome to Flavian*, Leo characteristically creates a series of antitheses to show the dual natures of Christ. Leo insists on the unity of Christ—that the human actions of Christ are effected “not without the Word,” and the divine power acts “not without the flesh”—while at the same time distinguishing what properly belongs to the Word and to the flesh.

Here, however, Dupuis’s exegesis of Leo draws out implications beyond the incarnational focus of Leo’s sermon, arguing that to speak of things done by the Word “not

41. Dupuis, “Le Verbe de Dieu comme tel et comme incarné,” 507.

42. Bernard Green speaks of the “ineptitude” of Leo’s description of the natures-in-action, in the famous phrase from the *Tome to Flavian*: agit utraque forma cum alterius communione quod proprium est, Verbo scilicet operante quod Verbi est, et carne exsequente quod carnis est. As Green notes, the phrase “apparently describ[es] the two forms, the Word and the flesh, as separate principles of action in Christ.” See *The Soteriology of Leo the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2008), 154; quoting Leo, Tr. 54.2.

43. PL 54, 360B, quoted in “Le Verbe de Dieu comme tel,” 510.

44. PL 54, 360B–C.

without the flesh” implies that there must *also* be actions that the Word effects “without the flesh.”⁴⁵ According to Dupuis, Leo has opened up the possibility of an action of the Word “as such,” and this action would occur “without the cooperation of the human nature, although still in ‘communion’ with it.”⁴⁶ Dupuis thus adds yet another degree of communion, now not a mode of divine power made visible through the distinctly human acts of Jesus (what the Word does not do without the flesh and vice versa) but rather a mode of divine action unmediated by the humanity of Christ but nonetheless in some fashion in communion with the humanity. Dupuis’s interpretation of Leo here is questionable. When Leo speaks in Sermon 64 of “what the flesh does not do without the Word” and “what the Word does not do without the flesh,” he is not contrasting what the Word or the flesh do in communion with the other with what (speculatively) each might do *outside of* union with the other. Rather, Leo is challenging a docetic Christology that would place the reality of divine and human operations in doubt: that is, “what the Word does not do without the flesh” is implicitly contrasted to what the Word would do within a monophysite Christology (without being truly incarnate), and not what the Word might do “as such” within a wider economy. So while Dupuis quite legitimately seeks to respond to new questions on the basis of Chalcedon and Leo, questions that did not arise within fifth-century Christology, in Dupuis’s handling of Leo we find an appropriation of some problematic language of communion, to which is added a somewhat unwarranted extrapolation from Leo’s anti-docetic language to support the action of the Word as such, “without the flesh.” None of this renders Dupuis’s Christology Nestorian, resulting in a bifurcation of the person of Christ, as his critics charge. But Dupuis’s extrapolations from Leo lead to a certain bifurcation of the operations of Christ, and ambiguity concerning the attribution of Christ’s activity to the natures as principles of action, with less than adequate emphasis on the single subject to whom all Christ’s actions, divine and human, are to be ascribed.

Furthermore, Dupuis’s argumentation elides economic and theological statements, and thus is often more ambitious than it appears. He refers repeatedly to the infinite mystery of the divine life: “Does the Jesus Christ event ‘define’ the Word of God? Does it not rather express outside the divine life what the Word represents within the mystery of the divine life?”⁴⁷ He cites Thomas: *divina natura in infinitum humanam excedit*.⁴⁸ He argues that in making the Word-as-such–Word-incarnate distinction he has done nothing more than state “that, while becoming man, the Word of God remains God anyway.”⁴⁹ But Dupuis is in fact arguing for something more than that “God

45. Dupuis, “Le Verbe de Dieu comme tel,” 510.

46. Dupuis, “Le Verbe de Dieu comme tel,” 510–11. The argument regarding Leo’s sermon is replicated in English in *Jacques Dupuis Faces the Inquisition*, but here Leo’s double negative, *quid sit quod Verbum sine carne non efficit*, is mistranslated, “what it might be that the Word does without the flesh” (44).

47. Dupuis, “The Word and the Christ,” 186.

48. *Summa contra Gentiles* 4.35.8; cf. Dupuis, “Le Verbe de Dieu comme tel,” 513.

49. Dupuis, “Universality of the Word,” 334.

remains God.” What in patristic and medieval theologies is a negative, apophatic statement of the ultimate incomprehensibility and transcendence of God’s inner life—*theologia*—becomes in Dupuis the basis for a positive speculation about the variety of revelatory modes in the *oikonomia*:

As for myself, I consider it imperative to distinguish clearly what belongs intrinsically to the divine mystery in itself—the Word with God from all eternity—from what belongs to the order of God’s manifold ways of manifesting himself in history. Only then is it possible to preserve at once God’s transcendence and his absolute liberty in communicating himself to human beings.⁵⁰

One might register a concern analogous to that of Karl Barth regarding the *extra calvinisticum*, that the distinction between the transcendent divinity of Christ and his limited humanity risks becoming a means of speculating about a God “whom we think we can know elsewhere,” prescinding from Christ.⁵¹ The infinite mystery and absolute freedom of God’s inner life may well be the immanent trinitarian ground for a diversity in the self-communication of the economic Trinity through history, but the intra-trinitarian life is also the ground for the unique paradox of the Incarnation, a God who appears *sub contrario*. The freedom of God is indeed a freedom from the domestication of human constructs, but it is also the freedom of God to be *this* God, the God revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. What does God’s “absolute liberty” now mean in light of the Incarnation and Paschal Mystery?

Finally, given Dupuis’s negotiation of the *theologia–oikonomia* distinction, a further concern arises about inconsistency in addressing the mediation of divine action. Dupuis withdrew the terms *Logos asarkos* and *Logos ensarkos* in favor of “the Word as such” and “the Word incarnate” so as to avoid any inference of a duality of subjects. But there are still ambiguities in speaking of an operation of the Word “as such,” for there cannot be a naked, unmediated revelation of the Logos in the economy. What does it mean when Dupuis says, “The action of the Word as such does not belong to the order of mediation, but to a possible action of God, humanly unmediated”?⁵² Or what constitutes “direct divine saving action outside the humanity of Christ after the Incarnation”?⁵³ This activity of the Word-as-such must surely be the salvific activity of God mediated historically, culturally, socially, and religiously, within various concrete contexts. If what is at stake is a diversity of mediations of God’s saving activity related by way of derivation or participation to the revelation of God in Jesus, then

50. Dupuis, “The Word and the Christ,” 192.

51. See Darren O. Sumner, “The Twofold Life of the Word: Karl Barth’s Critical Reception of the *Extra Calvinisticum*,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15 (2013): 42–57 at 52, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2400.2011.00620.x>. On Dupuis and the *extra calvinisticum*, see Edward T. Oakes, *Infinity Dwindled to Infancy: A Catholic and Evangelical Christology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 416.

52. Dupuis, “Le Verbe de Dieu comme tel,” 508. My translation.

53. Burrows, *Jacques Dupuis Faces the Inquisition*, 51.

description of such diversity in divine action as activity “of the Word as such” is imprecise. It suggests a divine activity stripped of created mediation, working monenergistically, contrary to what Dupuis wants to claim, and what he does (we shall see) claim elsewhere.

Counterpoints and Expansions

Thomas Hughson has aptly described Dupuis’s Logos theology as a “remainder concept,” which while not being erroneous must be regarded as incomplete.⁵⁴ In what ways, then, might Dupuis’s “remainder concept” be correctively amplified and enriched rather than rejected *tout court*? Here I want to suggest two possible directions that would clarify ambiguities in Dupuis’s Christology. The first is a stronger emphasis on analogy between the natures and operations of Christ, and between the wider economy of the Word and Spirit and the incarnate action of Christ. Here, I draw on resources from a broader post-Chalcedonian Christology than Dupuis presents. The second is a stronger emphasis on the eschatological work of Christ in and through his risen humanity, such that one can affirm the unsurpassability of the Incarnation while maintaining a necessary, eschatologically grounded reserve with regard to varying modalities of saving revelation in the economy.

Taking up the first point, I suggest that the analogical relationship between the human and divine operations of Christ needs greater emphasis than Dupuis offers. I have shown that Dupuis’s appropriation of Leo’s language, of communion between Christ’s natures and actions, forms the dogmatic bulwark for Dupuis’s own distinction between the actions of the Word as such and of the Word incarnate. Within the historical life of Jesus, there are degrees of communion with some human actions allowing the divine action to shine through more than others. And beyond the historical life of Jesus, Dupuis claims, one can extrapolate degrees of synergy between the human and divine natures, including operations of the Word-as-such in communion with but unmediated by the human reality of Christ. But I have also suggested that this Leonine language of communion is ambiguous. Leo’s usage of “communion,” notwithstanding its analogical application to natures rather than persons, appears to denote an extrinsic relationship between independent entities, properties, and principles of action. The Leonine language of communion would seem to require the counterbalancing emphasis on the theandric person and operations of Christ. Such theandricism need not lapse into “inverse monophysitism,” as Dupuis fears. Rather, the notion of Christ’s theandric person as it emerged in post-Chalcedonian Christology casts light on the *analogical* relationship between the natures and their operations. For post-Chalcedonian thinkers such as Maximus the Confessor, the relationship of the human and divine natures within the person of Christ is never just a matter of straightforward distinction or parallelism. Thus Maximus writes,

54. *Connecting Jesus and Social Justice*, 172–73.

So also in the mystery of the divine Incarnation: the Godhead and the humanity are united hypostatically, but neither of the natural energies is displaced by the union, nor are they unrelated to each other after the union, but they are distinguished in their conjuncture and embrace. For the active power of his own Godhead, the Word made flesh, possessing the whole power of his humanity, with all its openness to suffering, quite unimpaired by the union, being humanly God, performs wonders, accomplished through the flesh that is possible by nature, and being divinely man, he undergoes the sufferings of nature, making them perfect by divine authority. Or rather in both he acts theandrically, being at the same time both God and man, sufferings showing that he is what we have become, and by performing wonders demonstrating to us what we are to become, and by both confirming the truth of those things from which and in which and which he is.⁵⁵

It is instructive that Maximus, the great defender of the two wills of Christ, also emphasizes the unity of Christ who is “humanly God” and “divinely human,” acting theandrically. Maximus speaks not just of a conjunction of natures and operations but also of their unity and embrace within the hypostasis of the Word incarnate, the *perichōrēsis* of natures and operations of Christ.⁵⁶ What emerges in the post-Chalcedonian synthesis of Maximus is a more robust account than in Leo of the unity of natures within the composite hypostasis of the Son—not such that they are mixed or confused, but such that they are *related analogically* (the musical image of “attunement” can be helpful here). For Christ to be “humanly God” and “divinely human” means for Maximus that in the Incarnation Christ has rendered his human nature and operations expressive, at the highest human pitch, of his personal existence as Son and Word of the Father.

What implications might this counterbalancing emphasis have on Dupuis’s Word-as-such–Word incarnate distinction? A more balanced Chalcedonian Christology emphasizing the analogy of the human and divine in Christ would serve as a reminder that Christ as the Word incarnate, in his humanity, remains the hermeneutical key for Christian discernment of God’s wider saving work. Dupuis posits a work of the “Word as such” as a means of affirming divine freedom, but that same freedom has tied itself irrevocably to the human figure of Jesus. Thus for Christian theology there is no access, no proper adjudication of modes of saving revelation without reference to Christ. To be sure, Dupuis does not deny this point. He acknowledges the difficulty of identifying and adjudicating the wider revelatory work of the Word, and rightly he acknowledges that a Christian discernment of “saving values” in other religions cannot prescind from the specifically Christian in favor of a supposedly neutral notion of the *humanum*.⁵⁷ He insists that Jesus must remain the norm to which any possible operation of the Word “as such” must be correlated:

I have insisted everywhere that the saving action of the Word as such must always be viewed as essentially relational to the historical saving event of Jesus Christ, which represents the

55. Maximus, *Amb.* 5, PG 91, 1060A–C, in *Maximus the Confessor*, trans. and ed. Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London/New York: Routledge, 1996), 178–79.

56. See Maximus, *Opusc.* 7, PG 91, 88A.

57. See Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 319.

apex of God's personal engagement with humankind and the hermeneutical key for understanding all dealings of God with humanity.⁵⁸

And Dupuis appears to draw back from the implications of the expression "Word as such" when he endorses the more circumspect language of Claude Geffré ("derived mediations" within the unique mediation of Christ) and John Paul II ("participated forms of mediation").⁵⁹ A more robust sense of the analogical circumincession of human and divine in Christ would serve to highlight the normativity of the incarnate Word more forcefully still.

More expansively, one can speak of analogies at different levels, a network of analogies. Beginning with the analogy between Christ's human and divine natures, which expresses the analogy between *theologia* and *oikonomia*, it is possible to posit analogical workings of the Word and Spirit in the economy, not in general but in concrete mediated forms within religious traditions. And keeping in mind that analogy embraces both similarity and dissimilarity, one can endorse Dupuis's affirmation of genuine and enduring religious difference, and his commitment to the difficult and always-unfinished discernment of God's saving will among the religions. Yet for Christians, Christ remains the hermeneutical key, and naming where the triune God is active throughout human history and within religious traditions remains a discernment rooted in the specificity of Jesus Christ—not in such a way that revelation is constricted but rather such that all God's workings find their prime analogate in Jesus, the incarnate person of the Word, and his mission.

The second amplification that I propose is a stronger emphasis on the eschatological work of the Word incarnate in his resurrected and glorified humanity. While Dupuis acknowledges Christ as the "apex" of revelation, his emphasis is frequently on the limitations of Jesus' historical existence *in contrast to* the transcendence, universality, and freedom of the Logos, hence his frequent references to the limited human consciousness of Christ. As argued earlier, Dupuis is no proponent of a purely functional or adoptionist Christology: he is concerned to show that the personal unity of Christ as only Son of God is historically mediated, in a necessarily limited fashion, via his human filial consciousness. At the same time, Dupuis's emphasis on Christ's limited pre-paschal consciousness does not necessarily tell the whole story of revelation in and through Christ. What was thematized in Jesus' own consciousness and in his teaching and ministry is not the totality of the Christ-event.⁶⁰ That "event" includes elements of salvific significance not mediated solely through Christ's historical consciousness (in a thematic mode) but also illumined after the fact, in the ongoing reflection and actualization of the post-resurrection community guided by the Spirit.

58. Burrows, *Jacques Dupuis Faces the Inquisition*, 45.

59. See Dupuis, "Le Verbe de Dieu comme tel," 508; *Christianity and the Religions*, 168–69, citing *RM* 5.

60. See Karl Rahner, "Dogmatic Reflections on the Knowledge and Self-Consciousness of Christ," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5, translated by Karl-H. Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), 193–215.

Furthermore, the Christ-event embraces the newness and expansiveness of Christ's resurrection and glorified humanity. Dupuis acknowledges that the particular historical humanity of Jesus has now been transfigured in the Resurrection, and yet the universal soteriological implications of the Resurrection do not appear to play a significant positive role in Dupuis's trinitarian Christology. He leans heavily on the Johannine Prologue as his biblical foundation for the distinction between the operations of the Word as such and as incarnate, but this protological emphasis of the Johannine Prologue needs to be complemented by eschatological themes of the New Testament. Paul, for instance, speaks of the whole of creation groaning in labor pains for liberation (Rom 8:22). In Colossians, Christ is the image of the invisible God, through whom all things were created, head of the body/church, firstborn of the dead, and the means of reconciliation "through the blood of his cross" (Col 1:15–20). And Hebrews, in portraying Jesus as the final and eternal High Priest, closely aligns Jesus' earthly life and disposition, the sacrifice of the Cross, and his eternal role as mediator of salvation (see Heb 9:15ff.).⁶¹ These passages suggest the universal salvific significance of Jesus Christ drawing all things to himself: protology is conceived retrospectively from eschatology, from the crucified and now risen person of Christ.

Dupuis himself is not entirely clear on the relation between the glorified humanity of Christ and a possible work of the Logos as such. While acknowledging the trans-historical operation of Christ through his risen humanity, Dupuis sees it nonetheless as limited:

That the historical event of Jesus Christ, which culminates in the paschal mystery of his death-resurrection, has universal saving significance need not be further elaborated. What, on the contrary, still requires to be accounted for is how its saving power reaches out to the members of other religious traditions. Is it merely through an invisible action of the glorified humanity which through its resurrection-glorification has become "transhistorical," beyond conditioning by time and space? Or does God's saving action in Jesus Christ reach them through a certain "mediation" of their own religious traditions? Are these, then, in a certain manner "channels" of Christ's saving power, and in what sense? Do the traditions lend a certain visibility and social character to the saving power of Christ as it reaches their members?⁶²

Dupuis does not deny the expanded efficacy of Christ's glorified, "transhistorical" humanity.⁶³ But in this passage Dupuis regards Christ's action in his glorified humanity as delimited ("Is it merely through ..."). Dupuis wants to affirm the historical, social

61. On the priesthood of Christ, see Gerald O'Collins and Michael Keenan Jones, *Jesus Our Priest: A Christian Approach to the Priesthood of Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2010).

62. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 316–17.

63. "[D]ue to the real transformation it has undergone through the mystery of his resurrection and glorification, the human being of Jesus has become 'transhistorical' or 'metahistorical,' and can thus exercise an efficacy that goes beyond the normal limits of time and space"; in *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 325.

dimensions of grace: he associates Christ's glorified humanity with the invisible bestowal of grace, limited to the interior realm, while religious traditions render Christ's saving power visible, historical, social. Or it could be that "the invisible action of the glorified humanity" prolongs the action of the Word incarnate, while the mediation of religious traditions would appear to be the mediation of the action of the Word as such. In either case, the saving action of Christ in his glorified humanity constitutes a limited mode of God's saving work, in need of further mediation or supplementation.

In a similar vein, Dupuis describes the giving of the Spirit by the risen Christ at Pentecost in terms of limitation:

It may be asked ... whether after the Christ event the communication of the Spirit and his active presence in the world take place solely through the glorified humanity of Jesus Christ, or, on the contrary, can also go beyond that limit. In other words, has the "Spirit of God" become the "Spirit of Christ" to such an extent that he can no longer become present and active beyond the communication of him that takes place through the risen Christ, in such a manner that his activity is henceforth circumscribed to that of the risen Christ, and in that sense limited?⁶⁴

Here Dupuis is concerned to stave off the christomonist tendency to subordinate the Spirit as a mere function of Christ. But whereas the New Testament tends to present the coming of the Spirit as an eschatological fulfilment and expansion, Dupuis emphasizes limitation and circumscription in the explicit identification of the Spirit as the Spirit of Christ. Such would be the case if the operation of the Spirit were now confined to the church.⁶⁵ But is there not a sense in which the Spirit of the risen Christ acts not "beyond" Christ's glorified humanity but as the Spirit drawing all of creation, which groans in labor pains, into union with Christ and through him with the Father? The Spirit of the risen Christ need not be confined to the church, just as the saving action of the risen Christ need not be limited to an invisible mission.⁶⁶

Interestingly, in a posthumously published commentary on his engagement with the CDF, Dupuis wrote,

As for the universality of the saving power of the Christ-event, it is based on the transhistorical character which Jesus' humanity had acquired by passing from the state of kenosis to its risen state. Due to this real transformation of Jesus' human existence, the saving power of the

64. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 178–79.

65. Dupuis connects the outpouring of the Spirit mediated by Christ's risen humanity and the mediation of the church in "The Truth Will Make You Free," 242.

66. Anne Hunt has argued that Aquinas's distinction between the visible and invisible missions of the Word avoids the problems of Dupuis's *asarkos-ensarkos* distinction. See Hunt, "Back to a Way Forward: Jacques Dupuis' Trinitarian Christology and the Invisible Missions of the Word and Spirit," *Pacifica* 19 (2006), 125–43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1030570X0601900201>. Here I want to place more stress on the eschatological in-gathering and bodiliness of salvation mediated by the risen Christ.

Christ-event transcends all limits of time and space and is universally operative. This universality knows no restriction whatsoever, and therefore the question of an economy of the eternal Word having “a greater universal value” (DI 9) than has the economy of the Word incarnate, does not even arise. There is but one divine economy with distinct aspects, equally universal and inseparable in their saving action.⁶⁷

Against the charge of separating God’s saving action into two economies, here Dupuis affirms that the economy of the eternal Word is coterminous with the universally operative power of the incarnate and risen Christ. One can ask, in this case, what constitutes the distinction of the two aspects—the creative and enlightening work of the Word as such and the eschatological recapitulative work of the Word incarnate. Echoing Cyril of Alexandria’s language for distinction of Christ’s natures in the unity of his person, Gavin D’Costa rightly questions whether the presence of the Word as such and the presence of Christ can be “really distinguished, other than theoretically.”⁶⁸

A christological approach more attentive to the unity of Christ’s person and action aligns with a more explicitly eschatological emphasis on the power of the risen Christ mediated by the Spirit. Such an approach would seem to cohere better than Dupuis’s Word as-such-incarnate distinction with soteriological themes in the New Testament and the broader Christian tradition. One need not revert to the transactional language of the infinite merit of the humanity of Christ, as some of Dupuis’s critics do.⁶⁹ Rather, a more strongly “resurrectional” approach can tap into ancient soteriologies of *theopoēsis*, divinization, whereby the power of the resurrection touches all of creation. The ascension marks the drawing-up and transfiguration of Christ’s humanity eschatologically, such that Christ can operate bodily in the church and sacraments. But the bodily resurrection of Christ has universal implications that extend beyond the visible church into all of creation. As Karl Rahner says, “the world as a whole flows into [Christ’s] Resurrection and into the transfiguration of his body.”⁷⁰ Or, as Anthony Kelly says, “Christ crucified, risen, and ascended to the right hand of the Father, remains in embodied communication with the world.”⁷¹ While it is true that the person and operations of the Logos cannot be contained within the necessary

67. Burrows, *Jacques Dupuis Faces the Inquisition*, 45; cf. Dupuis, “Le Verbe de Dieu comme tel,” 508.

68. D’Costa, review, 913. Cyril taught that in the concreteness of the union of hypostasis, Christ’s natures could be distinguished *en tē theoria monē*, only notionally. This was not to deny the reality of the human nature, or the reality of the distinction between the natures, but rather to exclude a separation (see Hans van Loon, *The Dyophysite Christology of Cyril of Alexandria* [Leiden: Brill, 2009], 531–43).

69. See e.g. Editorial Board, *Revue Thomiste*, “Tout récapituler dans le Christ,” 604–605; White, “The Universal Mediation of Christ,” 183.

70. Karl Rahner, “The Resurrection of the Body,” *Theological Investigations*, vol. 2, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1963), 213. See also Brian D. Robinette, *Grammars of Resurrection*, 365–67.

71. Anthony J. Kelly, “‘The Body of Christ: Amen!’: The Expanding Incarnation,” *Theological Studies* 71 (2010): 792–816 at 805, <https://doi.org/10.1177/004056391007100402>.

limitations of Jesus in his historical existence, in the resurrection his human embodiedness is expanded as a field of presence and communication.⁷² Creation is not only held in existence by the eternal Word, but moreover it is drawn into communion with God through the risen Christ and the Spirit, by a kind of redemptive traction from the already-inaugurated eschaton. While the creative work of Logos “as such” does not cease, it is now taken up into the universal work of reconciliation mediated through Christ’s glorified humanity. “For the Word of God and God,” writes Maximus the Confessor, “wills always and in all things to accomplish the mystery of his embodiment.”⁷³

Such an eschatological emphasis also maintains sufficient reserve to address Dupuis’s concerns about fulfilment theories—that is, about claims that the church is concretely, here and now, in possession of the fullness of truth, and that other religious traditions are merely manifestations of natural religious aspirations or stepping stones. Religious traditions beyond Christianity can indeed be said to have elements that belong to the saving economy of God, but these elements may be ascribed not only to the Logos as such who was in the beginning (John 1:1) but more concretely to the Logos who has irrevocably become incarnate, who suffered and died, who is risen, and who “draws all things to himself.”⁷⁴ It is true, as Dupuis insists, that we do not know the whole story, and that the historical figure of Jesus does not, cannot, exhaust the totality of either God’s inner life or economic workings. But Christ in his humanity remains the hermeneutical key, the pattern that unlocks the possibility of discerning God’s wider saving work, in all its complexity, within history and among religious traditions. As Rowan Williams says, “[T]he meaning of Jesus is not the container of all other meanings but their test, judgement and catalyst. Jesus does not have to mean everything; his ‘universal significance’ is a universally crucial question rather than a comprehensive ontological schema.”⁷⁵ If the “Christ event” is an open, continuing event that changes the situation irrevocably and orients us to the eschatological fulfilment of God’s saving desire, we avoid a constricted Christology focused *only* on the inevitable particularity and limitation of Christ’s historic existence, or on the limited mediation of saving revelation in and through Christ’s pre-paschal human consciousness. In the meantime, we can seek to discern also beyond explicit Christianity not just traces of the Word but concrete embodiments of Christ’s risen and active presence in the Spirit.

72. It should be noted that to speak of the universal operation of the risen Christ in his glorified humanity is not to do away with the perduring, unconfused distinction of natures and operations.

73. *Amb. 7* (PG 91:1084C–D), in *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary, 2003), 60.

74. See Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses* 3.16.6.

75. Rowan Williams, “The Finality of God,” in *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 94. See the very helpful article “The Finality of Christ and the Religious Alternative” by Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, *Theological Studies* 78 (2017): 348–68, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563917698557>.

I would argue, therefore, that what is more helpful than Dupuis's Word as-such-incarnate distinction (though perhaps less original) is his presentation of the reign of God. It is here that Dupuis himself offers a vital eschatological complement to his Logos-theology: "The Reign of God to which the believers of other religious traditions belong in history is then indeed the Kingdom inaugurated by God in Jesus Christ. It is that Kingdom which God, in raising Jesus from the dead, has put into his hands; under the kingship of Christ, God has destined it to grow toward its final plenitude."⁷⁶ Dupuis's shift to the eschatological motif of the reign of God does some of the same substantial work as his distinction of the operations of the Word as such and as incarnate, without the liabilities of the as-such-incarnate distinction. Dupuis maintains distinctions between Christ, the church, and the reign of God in its historical instantiations and eschatological fullness, without, however, separating them.⁷⁷ He anchors the universal salvific action of God more clearly in Jesus' announcement and enactment of the reign of God and in Jesus' continuing saving presence as the Risen One:

One cannot separate the Reign of God in history from the Jesus of history, in whom it was instituted by God, nor from Christ, whose present kingship is its expression. Through sharing in the reality of salvation which the Reign of God is, the "others" are by this very fact subject to the saving action of God in Jesus Christ, in whom the Reign of God has been established.⁷⁸

Under the rubric of the reign of God, Dupuis ascribes a more robust universal mediating activity to Christ through his glorified humanity: "The universal mediation of Christ in the order of salvation concretely refers to the fact that his risen humanity is the channel, the instrumental efficient cause, of grace for all people."⁷⁹ Finally, the universal work of the Spirit is more closely aligned to incorporation into the Christ-event and into the trinitarian life:

The cosmic influence of the Spirit cannot be severed from the universal action of the risen Christ. His saving function consists in "centering" people, through the medium of his immanent presence, on the Christ whom God has established as the mediator and the way leading to him ... The specific function of the Spirit consists in allowing persons to become sharers, whether before or after the event, of the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection ...⁸⁰

76. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 202.

77. Thus, Dupuis's treatment of the reign of God must be distinguished from the pluralist regnocentric paradigm advocated, for instance, by Paul Knitter, and rejected in *RM* 17–18. See Paul F. Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, ed. John Hick and Paul F. Knitter (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987), 178–200.

78. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 201.

79. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 211.

80. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, 197.

Dupuis insists here that religious traditions contribute to salvation by mediating salvation historically and socially: they constitute diverse “mediations of the Kingdom.”⁸¹ As in his discussion of the operations of the Logos and of sacramentality, Dupuis posits analogical levels of mediation, not all of the same order (in competitive or parallel relation). But here he is more circumspect about the relation of non-Christian mediations of salvation to the church, and he more clearly avoids the suggestion that the mediation of salvation in religious traditions belongs to a distinct action of the Logos “as such.” There is, surely, a wider action of the Logos with the Spirit in the economy, but this action is ascribable now to the One who has become and is irrevocably incarnate, drawing all things to himself and to the Father.

Conclusion


This reevaluation of Jacques Dupuis’s Christology has been necessarily selective. Many more questions remain unsettled, for instance regarding Dupuis’s operative theology of grace, the ecclesial mediation of saving revelation, theological method, and the need for a more robust pneumatology to address religious pluralism.⁸² My examination here has been restricted to two main aims. The first was to contest some of the recent criticism of Dupuis’s Christology and to show the legitimacy of Dupuis’s own claim to doctrinal orthodoxy. The second was to offer a detailed historical-theological assessment of Dupuis’s Christology, particularly his Word-as-such-incarnate distinction, and to highlight both strengths and limitations that have hitherto been missed amidst the polemics surrounding Dupuis. With Gerald O’Collins and others, I find in Dupuis a stringent and self-critical christological thinker seeking an expansion of Christology anchored solidly in the doctrinal tradition. Dupuis’s emphasis on the universality and unity of the saving revelation of the triune God can only be to the good, and he rightly sounds a note of warning in defense of divine transcendence and freedom. But I have characterized Dupuis’s appropriation of classical Christology as “Leonine,” as it attempts to follow and extend the interpretation of Chalcedon influenced by Leo the Great. This interpretation is not “Chalcedonian” pure and simple, but rather it is *a certain kind* of Chalcedonianism, a selective kind, which at times too easily neglects or downplays other legitimate christological concerns and so is itself in need of counterbalancing emphases. The distinction of Christ’s natures cannot tell the whole story, such that we are only left with difference. In the Incarnation we find also a unity, not as mixture, but as the analogy of infinite and finite being and agency enacted in the person of the Word made flesh. Similarly, protology, including the creative work of the Logos “as such,” can only be a part of the whole story, since the story is now radically qualified by an eschatologically oriented Christology. Such an

81. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions*, 202.

82. On this final point, while Dupuis does not neglect pneumatology, his focus is clearly christological. For a helpful exploration of the distinctive mission and economic primacy of the Holy Spirit, see Peter C. Phan’s *The Joy of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2017), 51–74.

eschatological turn, grounded in the human life of Jesus Christ, crucified and now risen, should render us confident in God's universal saving will and in the consistency of God's action always and everywhere with God's self-communication in Christ. At the same time, such an eschatological turn should engender humility before the mystery of the renewal of the world by the Word and Spirit, which takes place in myriad ways, and which has not yet reached its consummation.

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