

The Christology of Isaak Dorner Revisited

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Abstract: Isaak Dorner was a major German theologian of the mid-nineteenth century. His major work was a history of the doctrine of the person of Christ, but his own constructive Christological proposals have largely been overlooked. Dorner postulates a universal human capacity for the divine and an eternal will of the Divine to become human through the Logos. He denies that the human nature is either abstract or general. Jesus is a special human being created by God, a Second Adam with a unique responsiveness to the Divine. The special aspect of Dorner's Christology is his contention that the incarnation must be progressive. As the human life of Christ developed there must have been also development of the God-humanity as the Logos continually appropriated new capacities generated by the human development. His Christology sought to protect the full humanity of Christ as expressed by the young Luther, yet also protect the changeless glory of the Divine as expressed in Reformed theology.

ISAAC DORNER WAS ONE OF THE OUTSTANDING German theologians of the nineteenth century. Though nowhere nearly as well known in the English-speaking world as figures such as Schleiermacher, Hegel and Albrecht Ritschl, he was nevertheless a theologian of great stature.¹ His major work was in the area of Christology but his own particular contribution in that area of doctrine is little known today. The intention of this essay is twofold: first of all to familiarise readers with the particular Christological proposals which he made, and secondly to assess those proposals and suggest ways in which they may be important for contemporary Christology.

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Isaak Dorner was born in 1809; he studied at Tübingen between 1827 and 1832 and became associate professor of theology there in 1838. He went on to hold professorships at Kiel (1839), Königsburg (1843), Bonn

1. S. H. Russell says of him that "by general consent [he] is acknowledged to be the greatest of the German mediating theologians", in "Isaak Dorner: A Centenary Appreciation", *Expository Times* 96 / 3 (1984), 77-81.

(1847), Göttingen (1853) and finally Berlin (1862). During his career he published a number of major theological works. The first of these was an erudite three-volume work entitled *Entwicklungsgeschichte von dem Lehre von der Person Christi*,² which appeared in 1839-45. In 1867 he published the two-volume *Geschichte der protestantischen Theologie besonders in Deutschland*³ and in 1879-80 *System der christlichen Glaubenslehre*.⁴ His *System der christlichen Sittenlehre* was published posthumously.⁵ In addition he wrote a large number of theological essays, which were published in his *Gesammelte Schriften* just prior to his death.⁶ One of these essays, *On the Proper Conception of the Doctrine of God's Immutability*, which has only recently been translated into English in its entirety,⁷ has a significant bearing on his Christology.

In spite of this impressive academic record, Dorner was not just an academic theologian; he was always vigorously involved in the affairs of the church in Germany in his time. Like Schleiermacher, he believed that theological scholarship must be accompanied by practical involvement in the church's life. As a theologian he saw himself as mediating not only between the philosophy of his time and the classical theological tradition but also between the Lutheran and Reformed traditions. He was intent on thereby strengthening and extending the union of Lutheran and Reformed churches which began with the enforced amalgamation of the two in the Prussian Union of 1817. He was also renowned for his character traits which included humility, simplicity, courtesy, gentleness and love. At his funeral it was said that great as were his merits in theological science, the noblest thing about Dorner was his personality, which reflected the image of Christ and impressed itself indelibly on all who knew him.⁸

NEGLECT OF DORNER'S CHRISTOLOGY

Despite the fact that Dorner was such an important figure in German theology in the nineteenth century and in spite of his massive work on Christology, very little attention has been paid to his own Christology

2. Stuttgart: S. G. Liesching, 1845. This was published in English under the title *A History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ* (5 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1880-97).

3. München: J. G. Cotta, 1867. English translation: *A History of Protestant Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1871).

4. Berlin: W. Hertz, 1880. English translation: *A System of Christian Doctrine* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1880-82).

5. Berlin: W. Hertz, 1885. English translation: *System of Christian Ethics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark 1887).

6. *Gesammelte Schriften aus dem Gebiet der systematischen Theologie: Exegese und Geschichte* (Berlin: W. Hertz, 1883).

7. *Divine Immutability – A Critical Reconsideration*, translated by Robert R. Williams and Claude Welch, with an introduction by Williams (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

8. John A. Faulkner, "Dorner and Christ", *Methodist Quarterly Review*, 76/2 (1927), 242-56, quoting Dr Kleinert, Dean of the Theological Faculty at Berlin.

over the past century. I was alerted to his distinctive contribution many years ago by the brief summary of his ideas in H. R. Mackintosh's book, *The Person of Jesus Christ* published in 1912. For this essay I searched through ATLA and Google for references to Dorner's Christology but found very little. Karl Barth has a very sympathetic chapter on Dorner in his *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, but he has almost nothing to say about his Christology.⁹ There is a brief account of Dorner's Christology with a critique in Pannenberg's *Jesus – God and Man*;¹⁰ another brief treatment appears in Welch's *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*¹¹ and a similarly brief treatment is included in S. H. Russell's article on Dorner in the December 1984 issue of *The Expository Times*.¹² I found very little else.

DORNER'S CONCERNS

Dorner was very dissatisfied with the theologies of his time. Many reflected the new philosophies current in the early part of the century, which for the most part paid little respect to the tradition. He was also concerned by the predominance that was being given in his time, in an increasingly one sided manner, to the divine nature, ignoring the careful balance given to the two natures, divine and human, in the Chalcedonian declaration. Dorner acknowledged that the Kenotic Christology of G. Thomasius, W. F. Gess and others shared with him this concern but he could not support the Kenoticists because their theories, in his opinion, were often self-contradictory, failed to overcome the problems in the classical doctrine, particularly with respect to the union of the two natures, and went too far in modifying the doctrine of the divine immutability.¹³

By no means was Dorner committed to a strict classical doctrine of God's immutability. He recognised the fact that developments in the world make a difference to God. Were this not so, he believed, it would be impossible to speak meaningfully of divine love. Nor is God's knowledge immutable but God is immutable with respect to his ethical essence. This far there was no major disagreement between Dorner and the Kenoticists, but when the Kenoticists proposed that the Logos divested himself in the incarnation of all other divine characteristics –

9. Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History* (London: SCM, 1972). Russell writes in "Isaak Dorner: A Centenary Appreciation", "Barth showed towards [Dorner] a deep, even if critical respect. His influence upon Barth is perhaps most evident in his treatment of the general doctrine of God in *Church Dogmatics* II/1."

10. W. Pannenberg, *Jesus – God and Man* (London: SCM, 1968) 304-307.

11. Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (2 vols.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972-1985) Vol 1, 279.

12. See note 1 above.

13. For Dorner's thorough critique of the Kenoticists, see *Divine Immutability – A Critical Reconsideration*, 49-81.

attributes such as omniscience and omnipotence – Dorner protested that this would represent the depotentiation of God. Dorner also argued that the Kenotic Christology implied that during the period of Jesus' early life before he had attained self-consciousness, the Logos must have foregone self-consciousness himself. But self-consciousness has always been held to be of the very essence of God. If it is held that the Logos can somehow strip himself of this it would seem that this Christology has abandoned the *atreptos* and *analloiotos* ("without change") insisted on in the tradition with respect to both natures in the incarnation, and explicitly stated in the Chalcedonian symbol.¹⁴ Worse still, as Dorner sees it, the majesty of the Son of God and his government of the world are supposed to have been suspended during the period of Christ's earthly existence. For Dorner this self-depotentiation of the Logos represents an intolerable attack on divine immutability.¹⁵

Drawing on his immense historical knowledge of the doctrine, Dorner reflects on the numerous christological proposals that have been made and finds them all wanting. He decisively rejects adoptianism and Nestorianism. He applauds monophysitism for its rejection of Nestorianism, but he regards all three of these heresies as guilty of the same error, namely starting from the idea that God and man are absolutely distinguished and divided from one another by their nature. He maintains that when one begins with this presupposition it becomes impossible to think of them in a unity such as faith desires. This is most clearly illustrated in the cases of adoptianism and Nestorianism. But it is also true of monophysitism, which holds the two natures so exclusively opposed to one another that the only way in which it can bring them together is by abridging the human nature or absorbing it into the Divine.¹⁶

Dorner regarded the Chalcedonian definition positively because it "did the service of opposing doctrines of mutation and commingling as well as Nestorianism",¹⁷ but he makes the common criticism that it failed to achieve a positive description of the relation of the two natures in the incarnation. It was to resolve this problem that the doctrine of *anhypostasia* (unparticularised human nature) developed. According to this theory the human nature of Christ had no *hypostasis* of its own, which means that it was not personalised but was simply generalised human nature. Dorner correctly accuses this theory of leading "to a

14. *atreptos* and *analloiotos* have much the same meaning in Patristic Greek, "unchangeable" or "immutable", and are often associated. The latter occurs, for example, in Cyril's treatise *Against Nestorius* with respect to the two natures in the incarnation, and the former occurs in the Chalcedonian definition, where it is translated as "without change".

15. For Dorner's argument in full see his *History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, II/3 (1868) 248-59.

16. I. A. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* (see note 4 above) III (1896), 211-215.

17. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* III, 216.

more subtle kind of Apollinarianism or even a mere theophany and Doketism".¹⁸ So far as I can see Dorner makes no reference to either Leontius or *enhypostasia*, which in the past century has replaced *anhypostasia* as common orthodoxy on Christology. Leontius's theory proposed that the human nature was personalised by the Logos, who included within his own being all that was necessary to personalise and particularise the general and abstract human nature which the Logos assumed. However, it is unlikely that Dorner would have looked upon this theory any more favourably.

With regard to Reformation Christology, Dorner clearly favours Luther over Calvin. Dorner believes that Luther recognised that the divine and human natures do not repel or exclude each other but seek each other according to their inmost nature. He did not regard the humanity of Christ as impersonal and did not intend to give any ground to monophysitism. Dorner says that Luther acknowledged a true human development in Christ and quotes with approval Luther's commentary on Luke 2:40. "The words, 'He increased in spirit and wisdom' must stand fast, and all peculiar imaginary articles of faith, which would put themselves in opposition to this word, are to be allowed to go: one must understand the words according to their simplest signification."¹⁹ Dorner affirms also Luther's doctrine of the communication of attributes between the two natures; he laments, however, that Luther's early Christology was later impaired by the dispute about the Holy Supper.

In the generation following Luther there developed a division between Lutheran theologians over Christology. Johann Brenz (1499-1570) affirmed in the spirit of the early Luther that the humanity of Christ was *capax divinitatis* (capable of the Divine). Martin Chemnitz (1522-86) on the other hand would have nothing to do with a *humana capacitas* (human capacity for the Divine) and also insisted that the union of the two natures in Christ was complete from the first. Dorner found both these views of Chemnitz uncongenial.

Dorner acknowledges that the Reformed Christology sought to be faithful to the position enunciated at Chalcedon, rejecting both monophysitism and Nestorianism. However it diverged from the early Luther and Brentz and approximated to the position of Chemnitz. Their slogan was *finitum non capax infiniti* (the finite is not capable of the infinite). Where the Lutherans asserted that the Logos was *totaliter in carnem* (totally in the flesh) not to confine the Logos, but to expand the humanity, the Calvinists argued that since the humanity of Christ must

18. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* III, 216. Dietrich Bonhoeffer made the same criticism of the doctrine of *enhypostasis* in his lectures on Christology, *Christ the Center* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) 81.

19. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* III, 244-5, quoting Luther's *Works* Erlangen Edition, Vol X, 300.

forever remain finite the infinite Logos could never be totally confined within the flesh of Christ. So they maintained that the Logos was also *extra carnem* (also outside the flesh). This position became known as the *extra Calvinisticum* – the Calvinist “outside”. However Dorner agreed that the Calvinists, no less than the Lutherans, maintained that the powers of the human nature were elevated by the Logos.

Dorner makes the often repeated observation that Lutheran Christology, without intending to, approaches too closely monophysitism, while the Reformed Christology approaches too near to Nestorianism and he was concerned to counteract both these tendencies.

DORNER'S OWN PROPOSAL

First of all it needs to be said that behind Dorner's own Christology stands an orthodox trinitarianism. Though influenced by Schleiermacher in many ways, Dorner rejected his view of the Trinity as Sabellian because he never really speaks of the immanent Trinity but only of an economic Trinity. At the same time Dorner did not regard the members of the Trinity as persons in the sense of being individual centres of consciousness. He believed that to do so would lead us in the end into tritheism and make it difficult to avoid ascribing a double personality to Christ. He believed that personality should be ascribed only to the Triune God in God's unity and that the divine distinctions should be described as “modes of existence” or “modes of being”.²⁰ (In this regard we may note Dorner's influence on Barth.) Yet in spite of that, Dorner insists that in the unity of God and man in Christ, neither the humanity nor the deity may be conceived to be impersonal.

When Dorner comes to set out his own Christology in a systematic way he admits that “the incarnation of God is a mystery” and that “no theory therefore will be quite adequate to this matter”. He sees his own contribution therefore not as a perfect solution but as part of the ongoing inquiry, which is a normal part of the life of faith.²¹ His modesty and humility in this respect should be an example to us all.

There are three elements, which taken together constitute the characteristic nature of Dorner's Christology. In the first place he rejects the notion that the incarnation requires the coming together of two quite disparate natures. On the human side Dorner postulates a universal human capacity for the divine and on the Divine the will to become human through the Logos. “[T]he Logos,” he says, “in power of his love, know[s] humanity as a determination of Himself, to give which to Himself there was in Him the eternal possibility and will.”²² This was

20. See Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 1, 279, citing § 32 of *Dorner's System of Christian Doctrine*.

21. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine* III, 281, 282.

22. Dorner, *History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, II/3, 249.

one point on which Dorner found support from a number of theologians of his day. He writes, "To the theology of the present day, 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."²³ He goes on to list numerous theologians of his day who agreed with him, including Coleridge and F. D. Maurice in England.²⁴

Secondly, Dorner insists that the human nature of Christ is neither abstract and general nor just that of any man. For the incarnation God has taken the initiative and prepared a special man who not only has the susceptibility to the divine, as all humans have, but also a unique openness and responsiveness to the Logos. Dorner strongly supports the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, and that for doctrinal reasons, because it opposes adoptianism and emphasises the Divine initiative. Dorner makes the point that notwithstanding Christ's *homoousia* with all human beings he yet differs from all of them "through being the head and representative of mankind".²⁵ In the *System of Christian Doctrine* he makes the same point using the first/last Adam typology. "He is not... the physical archetype of man: Adam is this; but as archetype he is the pneumatic archetypal man, the head and heart of humanity in the spiritual sphere."²⁶

The third characteristic feature of Dorner's Christology is his contention that the incarnation must be progressive, or to use his own word, augumentative. He insists that from the beginning the Logos is united with Jesus in the deepest bases of being, so that the life of Jesus was always God-human even from his beginning in Mary's womb.²⁷ However human life is characterised by growth and development and if Christ was truly human such growth must have pertained to his human life also. With this growth on the human side there must also have been growth of his God-humanity, as the Logos continually appropriated those new capacities generated by the human development. A receptiveness for the Deity never existed without its fulfilment. At the same time, on the other side, the growing actual receptiveness of the humanity would have consciously and voluntarily combined with new sides of the Logos. In this process Dorner sees no compromising of the divine immutability such as he finds in Kenotic Christology. He writes, "Human growth and divine immutability harmonize, inasmuch as God as Logos can enter without self-detriment into history, for the end of a progressive self-revelation in humanity, and this humanity is capable of

23. Dorner, *History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, II/3, 231.

24. No doubt Dorner was influenced by Schleiermacher at this point. See F. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (2 vols.; New York: Harper & Row, 1963) Vol 1, 64.

25. Dorner, *History of the Development of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, II/3, 232.

26. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, III, 323.

27. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, III, 328.

being increasingly incorporated with the immutability, again without the alteration of its nature."²⁸

CRITICISMS OF DORNER'S CHRISTOLOGY

In his *Expository Times* article S. H. Russell makes two criticisms of Dorner. With approval he quotes Emanuel Hirsch's criticism that on Dorner's presupposition, apart from Jesus' sinlessness, there is no essential difference between Jesus and other members of the human race, likewise endowed with the same basic receptivity towards God.²⁹ It is very difficult to understand how anyone who has read Dorner carefully could make this criticism. Presumably Hirsch is speaking in respect of Jesus' humanity since Dorner speaks clearly of the union of the Logos with the humanity of Jesus at the deepest levels from the very beginning. In that respect there is no other member of the human race like him. If it is of the humanity that Hirsch speaks, Christological orthodoxy expressed in the Chalcedonian declaration affirms that in respect to his humanity, Jesus is "like unto us in every respect, sin only excepted". Dorner certainly affirms this and the Christological tradition requires no more of him. Also Hirsch fails to note that while Dorner affirms that humanity in general is *capax divinitatis*, Jesus has an active receptivity to the divine which no other member of the human race has. He has this by virtue of God's will and creativity in that Jesus is from the beginning the second Adam. Hirsch's criticism might have some force against Schleiermacher but not against Dorner.

Russell states his second criticism as follows: "it would need some very adroit argumentation on Dorner's part to distinguish his position from that of monophysitism – 'after the union one nature'. Has he just drawn out the inevitable tendency in Lutheran christology that God has become man in such a thoroughgoing way, that Feuerbach's suspicion that God really is man is indeed justified?"³⁰

It is true that Dorner sometimes, in unguarded moments, sounds like a monophysitist of the Euthychian kind.³¹ However it is hardly likely that Dorner would be hard pressed to defend himself. He does not by any means speak of a single nature formed from the two natures after the union but only of a single self-consciousness and a single volition through the free co-operation of both natures. In the same section

28. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, III, 328.

29. Russell cites E. Hirsch, *Geschichte der neuern evangelischen Theologie in Zusammenhang mit den allgemeinen Bewegungen des europäischen Denkens* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1949) V/I, 386.

30. Russell, "Isaak Dorner" 80.

31. Consider, for example, the following statement: "When therefore that God-human unity, to which the two natures are united, arrives at self-consciousness, the self, which is the contents of the self-consciousness, is nothing else than the existent God-human living unity." (*A System of Christian Doctrine*, III, 314).

Dorner specifically disavows any annulling of the human and the Divine, which, he asserts, would actually result in a dissolution of the incarnation. And even if sometimes Dorner sounds monarchian, monarchianism is not by any means inherent in his approach to Christology. In fact Dorner may be more open to the charge of being a Nestorian than he is to the charge of being Eutychian.

More significant is the criticism of Wolfhart Pannenberg, the nub of which is stated in the following quotation:

Dorner could say that the divine-human unity is neither to be conceived as complete from the beginning, nor is it to be placed only at a later point in the course of Jesus' life. But in his own theory, is that preconscious working of God in Jesus already full divine-human unity? If so, then Dorner's theory is not in principle new over against the older incarnation theories that see the divine-human unity consummated at the beginning of Jesus' life. If Jesus' full unity with God is only attained at the stage of its conscious execution, it did not exist in the true sense at the beginning. Dorner surely had the intention of transcending this dilemma, but his theory does not really open up a way for doing that.³²

There are indications that even Dorner himself was aware of the difficulty of asserting both a true and proper incarnation of God from the beginning of Jesus' life and an augmentative incarnation throughout Jesus' life. Acknowledging the fact that the unity of God with this man and of this man with God was not conscious at first, he asserts that nevertheless God could "weave and work even in the beginnings of this human child".³³ The language is disconcerting; God's weaving and working in child or adult is not necessarily incarnational. However Pannenberg is forcing onto Dorner a dilemma which he will not own. The whole thrust of Dorner's argument is that the incarnation is augmentative. It is real from the very beginning but not complete; it is a full unity with God but it is a fullness that is capable of expansion as the human nature also expands.

My own critique of Dorner is that his proposal, as it stands, does not seem to avoid the main criticism which he makes of kenoticism. Dorner's observation that development is essential to human beings is sound, and therefore if Christ were truly human there must have been development in him, and hence Jesus' capacity to receive and be a vehicle for the expression of the Logos must have been a growing one. However, if the incarnation of the Logos commenced at the very beginning of the life of Jesus, prior to consciousness and even before

32. W. Pannenberg, *Jesus God and Man* (London: SCM, 1968) 306-07. Pannenberg refers to *A System of Christian Doctrine*, III, 439.

33. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, III, 336.

birth, how can Dorner conclude that there is no depotentiation of the Logos and no kenosis of the Logos in his Christology of the kind he so trenchantly criticises in the Kenoticists? He does not recognise that depotentiation any more than the traditional Christologies do, but in both cases it must have been there if the Logos had fully entered into the person of Jesus.

There are several ways in which Dorner might have dealt with this problem. He might have postulated that incarnation began only at some later stage in the development of the man Jesus when the human consciousness had developed to such a stage that a conscious receptiveness to the Logos was possible. This, however, would have been tantamount to adoptianism, which Dorner had committed himself to avoid.

Another way in which he could have dealt with the problem would have been to accept the Reformed doctrine that the Logos was both *in carnem* and *extra carnem* (that is, in Christ but also outside of Christ).³⁴ In places Dorner totally rejects this Calvinistic tenet.³⁵ He argues that it would lead to a double mode of existence of the Logos, *in Christ* and *outside of Christ*, if not a double Logos. Yet in other places Dorner does seem to understand the Logos as both *in* and *outside of Christ* in the incarnation. In the *System of Doctrine* he writes as follows:

Since, then, the Divine side of God as Logos cannot of itself enter into a state of potentiality, whilst the human side has nevertheless to first subject itself to development, the actuality of the former side at the beginning extends beyond the human. There cannot generally be at once actual knowledge and volition in the latter, consequently the human side cannot be made immediately participant in the knowledge and will of God as Logos, who ever conserves and rules the world. So far at first the actuality of the Divine Logos-life necessarily extends beyond the humanity....³⁶

Dorner writes only of the situation "at first"; he does not say how long this lasts. It may continue in a decreasing extent through to the resurrection or beyond. It is unclear whether Dorner thought there would ever be a point in Christ's development when the Logos would not extend beyond the humanity. At least in principle Dorner agrees to the extending of the Logos beyond the humanity of Christ and this

34. Calvin's view is well expressed in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* II/xiii/4, where he writes, "Here is something marvellous: the Son of God descended from heaven in such a way that, without leaving heaven, he willed to be borne in the virgin's womb, to go about the earth, and to hang upon the cross; yet he continuously filled the world even as he had done from the beginning!" Heinrich Heppel in *Reformed Dogmatics* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1950) 418, also cites the Heidelberg Catechism 48: "Since the divinity cannot be comprehended and is present everywhere, it follows necessarily that it is actually outside the human nature which it assumed, but is none the less in it and continues in personal union with it."

35. See, for example, Dorner, *Divine Immutability*, 55.

36. Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, III, 333.

would allow him to avoid the charge of depotentiating the Logos in the manner of the Kenoticists. It would also strengthen his claim to mediate between the Lutheran and Calvinist wings of the church, but how are statements both for and against the *extra carnem* to be reconciled?

DORNER'S CONTRIBUTION

Dorner does not resolve all the problems in the Christological tradition and his work is ambiguous and indecisive at some points, but that does not mean that he is no help to us. There are, in fact, a number of Christological issues on which he has something important to say. Firstly, he decisively maintains the initiative of God in the coming of Jesus, which seems to me to be the one essential theological point of the claims for the virgin birth. If this point is abandoned, with it must go something that is essential in the gospel. Adoptianist and ebionitic Christologies all fail at this point and Process Christologies are also suspect.

Secondly, one must admire his determination to uphold the true and full humanity of Jesus. Ever since Chalcedon the tradition has committed itself to this position but all too often that commitment has been undermined by the manner in which it has understood the union of the two natures and its fear of compromising the divinity of Christ. Kenotic Christology shared Dorner's concern and Dorner applauded its intention. He, no less than they, warmly embraced the religious value of the Philippian hymn to Christ Jesus (Phil 2:6-11) but he rejected the metaphysical conclusions they drew from it, in spite of which they did not adequately deal with the problem of the union of the two natures. Dorner's Christology does, and his notion of an augmentative incarnation deals with the issues addressed by kenoticism in a more satisfactory way.

It is particularly important in these days to be clear about the true humanity of Christ. Much popular religion is still quite docetic. This has its own problems for both theology and spirituality which we do not need to rehearse here. It is also very off-putting to many "would-be" believers. In reaction to this docetic Christology many scholars and lay people are now opting unapologetically for an unqualified ebionitic Christology, which has a warm appreciation for the man Jesus but thoroughly undermines the gospel. Dorner reminds us that it is possible to develop a reasonable Christology which avoids both these extremes.

While Dorner struggled for a truly human Jesus, his Christology does not abandon the claim that God was uniquely in Christ. Dorner was quite clear that from the beginning the Logos was united with Jesus in the deepest bases of being. That remains the case whether or not in the end Dorner has to accept a simultaneous being of the Logos outside the flesh. A Christology which abandons this claim puts a serious question

mark over the assertion that God is truly revealed in Christ and completely undercuts the gospel proclamation that the life and death of Christ represent and are God's self-giving for sinful people (Romans 5:8). By his insistence on the initiative of God and the union from the beginning of the Logos with the human Jesus, Dorner's Christology permits the gospel to stand firm.

Finally, even though Dorner is uncertain at this point, nevertheless his Christology prompts us to look again at the Reformed doctrine that is referred to as the *extra Calvinisticum* (the Calvinistic "outside") which held that the Logos was not restricted in the incarnation to being totally within Christ. This is a doctrine that never gained much support, and even amongst theologians is not well known, let alone addressed, but it is surely time to revisit it to consider whether it can assist us in our current Christological debates. It would seem to take care of the issues that troubled the Kenoticists better than their own theories do and would strengthen Dorner's own proposals.

One can see why Dorner hesitated to affirm boldly the *extra carnem*. It was important to him to affirm that human nature is *capax divinitatis*, and having done that he was reluctant to speak in what seemed to him to be a contradictory fashion. However it is possible to affirm that human nature is *capax divinitatis* but at the same time affirm with the Calvinists that *finitum non capax infiniti*. Hence while affirming that the Logos, the divine *Sophia*, was incarnate in Christ it may be argued that the Logos was never restricted to that one location.

CONCLUSION

Church and academy need a new Christology like the supermarket needs a new breakfast cereal. Even the revival of one long gone from the marketplace may seem like an unnecessary indulgence. But no one can say that all our Christological problems have been solved and that it is time to move on to some other doctrinal issues. As Dorner reminds us, the incarnation of God is a mystery for which no theory will be fully adequate, but each of us must find a theory which is adequate enough to permit us to go on thinking the faith and proclaiming the gospel. My hope is that Dorner's scholarship and proposals, now more than a century old, may assist us in our search.