

**Timothy Pawl. *In Defense of Extended Conciliar Christology: A Philosophical Essay*. Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. xii+272 pp. \$93.00 (hbk).**

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Timothy Pawl's book, which is basically the second volume of his masterpiece on Christology, is an important contribution to contemporary analytic theology; it is even more important than the first volume. This assessment may come as a surprise since the first volume seemed to lay the groundwork for an overall defense of the concept of the Hypostatic Union. But it is actually this second volume which will have much more impact. This has to do with very specific problems Analytic Theology currently has to face. Some European as well as American theologians are very eager to regard Analytic Theology as a version of neo-scholastic theology: a dead-end attempt to come up with a pseudo-physics of the divine while defining allegedly undefeatable first premises from which pretty much everything else seems to follow thanks to the tools of first order predicate logic. And, indeed, if one remembers the abundant reflections on the problem of how to make sense of Christological predications in Pawl's first volume, the question arises why Pawl is confident in treating Conciliar texts like math books and their convictions like formulas that are in need of better proofs instead of interpreting them as highly political texts that offer a certain cluster of words in order to keep already estranged parts of the wider Church in line. Followers of George Lindbeck might regard the attempt to defend the prestigious but expensive formulas of the Councils of the second half of Christianity's first millennium as a fall back into the traps of 'propositionalism,' while other theologians wonder why Pawl is not interested in the question on what grounds the Early Church identified a Galilean peasant and wonderworker with the Divine word and whether or not the concept of the Hypostatic Union is really the best way to express the relevance of Christ. Don't get me wrong: I think that Pawl's books are extremely valuable; and I have worked through them as someone who is driven by the same questions and the same methodology. But I am working in a theological environment where I have to add the hermeneutical flesh to the analytic bones, develop the theological adaptation of the variety of topics Pawl is treating: the possibility of multiple incarnations, the intermediary stage of Christ's existence after the Good Friday, the freedom of Christ, and the knowledge of Christ. And there is this little voice in my head that asks why analytic theologians are not trying to adapt theological methods themselves – at least in the version of a certain attitude which is humbly

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aware that the analytic embracement of propositionalism, realism, concept testing, etc. is something like a presupposition and recommendation but not the only way to approach the intriguing questions of Christology.

However, all these questions and problems have to be approached from a broader perspective, in order to be able to appreciate the merits of Pawl's second volume which also – by way of retro-causation – justifies the focus of the first volume. In a famous paper the late Richard Rorty introduced two styles of doing philosophy: one style – more or less identical to the analytic way – is concerned with resolving puzzles that are related to the ways in which we perceive and conceptualize reality and try to orient ourselves toward the truth. The second style, resembling the multi-layered and multi-fractioned domain of continental philosophy, is also interested in truth, but not insofar as to point out what truth consists of, but how the search for truth is able to transform us or to rip open the clothing of culture to reveal the untamed beasts within us. At first sight, it seems that Pawl's volumes on Christology are a more or less typical, state of the art products of analytic philosophy of religion, i.e. eager to resolve conceptual puzzles while offering additional, more nuanced, more distinctive concepts to accomplish this task. But it would be wrong to regard such an endeavor as a futile adventure. What some theologians trained in continental philosophy seem to miss is the impact of non-existentialist versions of atheism, i.e. versions of atheism that do not offer an alternative strategy of existential transformation in opposition to what religions seem to have in store for us (just be reminded of Nietzsche and, I apologize, some aspects of Heidegger), but are eager to point out that the Christian doctrine is self-contradictory right from the start. The second version of atheism is much more combative, much more interested in concepts and truth-claims and always points to a rather naturalistic metaphysics joining its forces. In that regard Pawl's books are more up to date since the most outspoken criticisms of Christianity are, these days, not focusing on alternative versions of dealing with the human tragedy of existence but on the more straightforward and more blunt question of whether what Christianity claims, after all, makes sense. Pawl's *Extended Conciliar Christology* offers a hermeneutics, so to speak, at gun point: in his first chapter Pawl is not denying that any treatment of the question why we should care about Conciliar formulas and why we should reconstruct the ways in which these formulas have been coined is not worthy of further consideration. Rather Pawl's own perspective is a humble one: these topics might remain reserved for future books by other authors and different scholars (cf. p. 8f.) while Pawl's very own goal is to defend Conciliar Christology in an environment that simply states that the Christian doctrine is irrational because it is self-contradictory (cf. p. 9f.). Any basic account of rationality would confirm that to be rational means to offer a model of the world that is as possible as it is consistent. For that very reason Pawl's attempt to flesh out Christological concepts and their implications is admirable, and reveal a praiseworthy intellectual virtue. His writings are an exercise on clarity (cf. esp. pp. 22-31), epistemological optimism, and fiducial trust when he indicates that the Conciliar formulas are worthy of being taken at face value (cf. pp. 13-17) insofar as they originate from our common, very human goal to find the truth (cf. pp. 3-7).

But there is more to say about Pawl's book on *Extended Christology*: it also offers a *transformative* experience – in the sense that more continentally leaning philosophers would indicate. For it consists of (and these are my words as a result of reading Pawl) an in-depth meditation of the outlines of human nature in the light of its peak possibility: in being intimately united with the divine. *Extended Christology* revolves around the salvific effects of the incarnation and does justice to the Christian commitment that doctrine ultimately serves the purpose to *understand* our salvation. Although Pawl gives us a fresh look at the somewhat neglected implications of Christian doctrine – the problem of multiple incarnations (part 1), the freedom and sinlessness of Christ (part 2), and the knowledge of Christ (part 3) – his book is not just a store selling antiques but remodeled doctrinal furniture to the acquired theological taste. Instead it provides answers to troubling problems of the core convictions of Christianity in an age that has learned about the sheer vastness of the cosmos possibly inhabited by unknown populations of intelligent and God seeking beings, that also struggles with the dimensions of human freedom, and longs for an answer to the question of how generations of the past and the future might be able to internally connect to the consciousness of Christ whose personal relation to every single mind-gifted individual is a prerequisite of salvation and grace-induced transformation. Again, anyone who denies the relevance of these questions might have a hard time explaining what makes the Galilean peasant and wonderworker Jesus of Nazareth different from, say, Socrates or Mahatma Ghandi. Unfortunately, these theological adaptations of the specific issues Pawl has treated in his book are rather implicit and have to be developed by those who read the book and get inspired by the freshness and ingenuity of conceptual clarifications. Nevertheless, such adaptations are possible and will open Pawl's endeavor up to another, interdisciplinary debate on central aspects of Christology.

The first specifically Christological part of the book (pp. 35-92) begins with a bit of a surprise because Pawl's crown witness is Thomas Aquinas. Clearly, Aquinas is absolutely in line with the Christological Councils of the past, but the problem of multiple incarnations, if I dare say, would never have occurred to the rather Greek, i.e. soteriologically oriented mindset, of the major Christological Councils. Therefore, this opening chapter has to be regarded as an extended thought experiment on Pawl's metaphysical modelling of the two natures approach. Although the modern theological mind might be shocked by the idea that each person of the Trinity could have become incarnate – Karl Rahner famously treated this view as problematic since it blurs the specific notions and roles of the Trinitarian person with the revelatory, word-enfleshed mode of revelation exclusively reserved to the eternal Logos – and might be opposed to the idea that there might have been or, at least, could be, multiple Incarnations, since Jesus of Nazareth is uniquely embedded into the relation the person of the Logos represents within the divine nature, Pawl treats the major problems of these views diligently and prudently. The partners in dialogue whose objections Pawl is willing to answer are not a random selection but are chosen for systematic reasons.

The most crucial problem of the idea of multiple incarnations is the relation of identity that, at first glance, seems to hold between different instantiations of the incarnation. Enclosed in Pawl's treatment of the multi-layered aspects of the problem is a short lesson on Christological predications (pp. 55-67) that offers a concise summary on Christological model formation and points back to the much more exhaustive discussions of these issues in Pawl's first volume on Christology. In a first step Pawl discusses the possibility of the Trinitarian persons becoming incarnate in one human nature along the lines of the too many thinkers-objection (pp. 67-70). Pawl's solution is another exercise in learning the grammar of his interpretation of the two natures view: if a divine person thinks in virtue of a concrete human nature, there aren't too many thinkers in the concrete human nature of Jesus of Nazareth. The second step is dedicated to the less technical but more speculative and even more important question of whether one (and the same) divine person could be incarnated several times (or even simultaneously in different worlds)? It is Brian Hebblethwaite who voices the Rahnerian argument that incarnation is fitting only for the divine Logos and that a series of incarnations might be a threat for the identity of Jesus Christ: would there be a whole bunch of concrete natures (as individuals) representing the glorified Christ (pp. 70-72)? Against Oliver Crisp and Robin Le Poidevin, Pawl states that the crucial problem disappears once we agree that the divine person does not become identical to the human nature of Christ (pp. 78), although Pawl is able to emphasize along with Hebblethwaite and others that the ultimate subject of incarnation(s) is God the Son. The lesson we can learn here is that, on a two natures' view, the assumption of a concrete human nature must not be modelled on the identity relation; there are other, better tools that serve the same purpose but open the door to multiple incarnations. Pawl also refutes Hebblethwaite's argument that the one divine subject of the eternal Logos can only become incarnate in one human subject, since this very argument makes sense only if we build a model of the incarnation on the identity relation again (pp. 80-82). Pawl continues the discussion in facing a renewed objection that, this time, does not argue on the basis of identity but on the basis of individuation (pp. 83-85). This time, Pawl's solution comes at higher costs: if we deny that the eternal Logos has an individuating effect on the concrete human nature, we need to regard the concrete human nature of Christ as an individual in its own right. But this is clearly not what the theological tradition would have wanted to say, because this solution comes close to Nestorianism. Defenders of the abstract nature view might see this result as a point in their favor: if the concrete nature view is able to deal with unwelcome consequences of their model only by tightening the bolts of their conceptual mechanics it might be a good option to substantially revise the model. These rather technical comments have a theological subtext: what is the inner impact of the eternal Logos on the life of Jesus of Nazareth? Jesus of Nazareth is not just an intelligent space suit (Oliver Crisp's analogy) nor a biological avatar (Brian Leftow's analogy) which serves as an instrument at the disposal of the eternal Son. If a more internal relation between the divine Logos and the concrete human nature has to be established in order to metaphysically explain what the theological convictions holds – namely the idea that we truly encounter *the* eternal Word in Jesus of Nazareth – we seem

to have no alternative to including the mode of individuation into the ‘mechanics’ of the Hypostatic Union. However, it might be worth exploring whether – on the side of the divine Logos – we might find very unique features which permit the eternal Logos to serve as an individuator for more than one earthly concrete nature. Pawl is aware of this option, but it might need a bit more of metaphysical exploration and unfolding.

The Rahnerian objection to the problem of the possibility of incarnation, with regard to the divine Father and the Holy Spirit, is voiced with the help of the late Munich theologian Michael Schmaus who argued that the incarnation of Father and Spirit is not only unfitting but also meaningless and even ‘impossible’ – contrary to Aquinas who explores this very possibility, as Pawl has shown, as an implication of a maximalist view of divine omnipotence. Pawl more or less accuses Schmaus, and along the same lines Kenneth Baker (pp. 90f.), of making a modal mistake; and he is right in doing so (pp. 87-91). But unfortunately, this misses the point of the *theological* discussion: the history of salvation shows, so is the conviction of many theologians through the ages, the very specific roles of the divine persons. These roles are unalterable because they define the relations between the divine persons while these relations contain the distinctive properties of the divine persons. If, as Hans Urs von Balthasar pointed out in quoting traditions from Origen to the Cappadocian Fathers, the role of the Father consists of *originating* the Son and *sending* the Spirit, it is necessarily so. The Father cannot become begotten, he cannot be sent, because this would be a violation of his role-defining properties. For 20<sup>th</sup> century theology, in redetecting the impact of the church fathers, the history of salvation is not a playground for omnipotent Trinitarian persons but the more or less precise icon of inner-trinitarian relations. If incarnation is the outcome of being originated by the Father and if this relation is a defining property of the Son, and thus distinct from the defining characteristics of the divine Father, then the possibility of incarnation is reserved to the Son only. Presumably Michael Schmaus (and Baker) may have used the term ‘impossible’ by way of rhetorical exaggeration; but if one allows the idea that for God what is most fitting to him is identical to an obligation God must obey, the unfittingness turns into an inner-divine standard of goodness God cannot change. Well, of course, taken literally anybody who is obliged to something, theoretically has to have the possibility to do otherwise. But how strict do we have to conceive of the outcomes of a divine standard of fittingness if the supreme being also incorporates supreme goodness? For the Father not to become God incarnate is not just a recommendation to stick to his Trinitarian role, it is much more than that; it is pretty much dictated by the unalterable Trinitarian framework of the Divine Being itself.

At the very end of the chapter Pawl gives us another hint to the benefits of the idea of multiple incarnations (but this time not related to the divine persons but to multiple incarnations of the Logos). As a matter of fact, this idea does not violate the above-mentioned role-depending ‘prohibitions’ against the incarnation of the Father and the Holy Spirit, but changes the perspective insofar as it offers another point in favor of multiple incarnations: if there are civilizations on other planets and if they are in need of salvation, then incarnations might have

occurred as the most fitting way of salvation (p. 90). Again, this is, indeed, an interesting point but it is also a perspective that has fascinated philosophers and theologians since the dawn of advanced astrophysics and the detection of surface structures on other planets. Basically, all these arguments represent a coded debate on interreligious dialogue: can there be incarnation in other cultures and religions? Pawl could have said more about the real – interreligious – issues behind the topic of multiple incarnations to underline the theological seriousness and benefit of mere speculative enterprises in advanced metaphysics. The same must be said about the contemplation of the possibilities of the incarnation of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Let us, for a minute, agree that there is such a possibility. What theological purpose would it serve? The problem is not just a metaphysical puzzle that offers interesting cases for a deeper inquiry into the constitution of unusual entities. Some theological research could have strengthened Pawl's intuition. For we know of some traditions that might emphasize a connection between the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit that is not so distinct from incarnation. Leonardo Boff has hinted at this idea which is able to point towards a very respectable but also very antique tradition. Others, like Heribert Mühlen, hinted at the notion of an incarnation of the Holy Spirit in the Church. This is, at least something, which the Second Vatican Council picked up, although not saying it explicitly. One might also wonder what an incarnation of the Father might look like; the best candidate would be – if we allow a dosage of panentheism to be included – the cosmos as such, given the fact that the Father's role revolves around originating, while the connection between the Holy Spirit and the church does justice to some well-founded theological traditions that see the Spirit as a force that brings life to communities and institutions. Clearly, such ideas move beyond the Thomistic framework that represents the starting point of Pawl's reflections. But Conciliar Christology is not exhausted by Thomism. It would strengthen Pawl's intuitions to bring more theological flesh to the metaphysical bones. But this is not just a problem in Pawl's overall very well written and theologically sensitive books but for the endeavor of Analytic Theology as such: it needs to get out of the analytic playground and needs to take theology seriously; theology's speculative goal, its continuous effort to broaden our understanding of the doctrine, its ongoing reflection of the multilayered aspects of the tradition and the complex meaning and implication of traditional texts and theological treatises.

The first part of Pawl's book closes with a very clear argument in favor of the idea that the incarnation did not break down during the interim state between death and resurrection (cf. pp. 94-115). Also in this case there is a broader theological problem that might have been worth noticing to assure the relevance of the topic for theological theory building: in the light of traditions like Wolfhart Pannenberg and others, theology had to develop approaches which laid the burden of proof for the statement that Jesus of Nazareth is the divine word on the resurrection. The resurrection seemed to serve as a model which offered advantages over and above a more incarnational oriented Christology, since the ultimate miracle was meant to serve as a vindication of what Jesus had proclaimed. If one stretches this idea to its limits, we run into the problem of quasi-

adoptionism: was Jesus not the Son of God before the resurrection? Or we have to face a version of retro-causation: was Jesus made the Son of God in the resurrection, so that in the light of the Easter experiences all the more humane experiences people had with Jesus of Nazareth could be narrated in an entirely different light? German theologians like Hansjürgen Verweyen warned against these strategies for it would turn the pre-resurrection life of Jesus into something like a preschool situation. But if we reintroduce a more incarnational Christology, so Verweyen argues, we would not have to throw all our eggs (for justifying Christology) exclusively into the one (Easter) basket; instead the different modes of encounter with Jesus – from his healing to his teaching to his ethical splendor – these could be seen as equivalent modes of the presence of the eternal Word in the whole life of Jesus of Nazareth. Pawl offers a solid argument for the idea that after Holy Friday the incarnation does not break down although Jesus's body is buried. Moreover, this very reflection permits us to connect the resurrection of Jesus with the many discussions of metaphysical models of resurrection we encountered over the last two decades in analytic philosophy of religion. Although the chapter on the interim state looks, at first glance, like an expanse and test case for the two natures Christology Pawl recommended, it is open to many and important theological adaptations.

What I said before about the transformative experience one might have in reading Pawl's *Extended Christology* is true especially of part 2 where Pawl discusses the freedom of Christ and his ability to sin in the light of Christ's sinlessness (pp. 119-165). Indeed, this topic has been neglected in theology for quite a while, but has come back to the agenda. 19<sup>th</sup> century Protestant theology was, on the contrary, almost obsessed with the topic of Christ's sinlessness since – after the thunderstorm of historical critical methods had hit systematic theology and after the trust in the accuracy of miracle reports and even in the possibility of miracles had eroded – Christ's ethical perfection was the only remaining evidential basis to build Christology on. Although a certain skepticism – regarding supernatural elements in our material universe – may have disappeared again, the ethical foundation of the Christological conviction is still extremely attractive since the ethical experience is seen as much more immediate, self-involving, and conscience provoking than the third person experience of reported miracles. In the light of these burdens the treatise of Christ's freedom and sinlessness is, to my estimation, the most important chapter of the book, because it is also an implicit treatise of theological anthropology.

Pawl defends dyothelethism (pp. 123-131) and secures a human will of Christ. Moreover, he ponders the possibility that a human will can be somehow subjected to a divine will without being destroyed or altered. In his stupendous insight into the most recent debates on free will Pawl offers us the picture of what one might call libertarian free will with a spiritual outcome: even within the framework of the Hypostatic Union we can be libertarians (as sourcehood libertarians) without having to neglect the principle of alternative possibilities completely; this view is exemplified and strengthened in Pawl's reflections on Christ's sinlessness (pp. 132-165). There is, of course, a very natural theological adaptation to this insight: according to Christian eschatology, human beings will

keep their nature and, as an integral part of their nature, their freedom in heaven despite the fact that there won't be any occasion to sin or to not be willing to join in the ultimate beatific vision of God. The overall layout of Pawl's chapter on Christ's freedom and sinlessness is also transforming because it serves as an exercise in clarification. Here theology can learn a lot in order to be more precise with regard to the distinction between sinlessness and impeccability. It becomes equally apparent that Pawl can teach us that our first-hand everyday intuition about the range of freedom must not be trusted.

The third part of the book (pp. 167f.) is dedicated to Christ's knowledge. Although one might have expected – after the insightful discussions of Christ's freedom and impeccability – that Pawl now faces one of the hardest problems of *Extended Christology*, namely the situation of Christ's consciousness, the lines of argument presented in the following chapters are more or less dedicated to the foreknowledge problem which is presented in a general and more christologically oriented way (pp. 167-169 and 193). At this point the book turns into a lesson in theistic fatalism, based on modal logic and a presentation of the eternalist solution to divine foreknowledge in its relation to future events and willful decisions. Of course, Pawl adds some reflections to draw a picture of the problems attached to the specific mental capacities of Christ, his superior knowledge, his embeddedness in the beatific vision, and his capacity to rely on infused knowledge (pp. 169-176). Pawl agrees with Aquinas insofar as there is – according to standard Christology – no doubt about the fact that, based on his human nature, Christ must have had the very same cognitive capacities we have as human beings. However, the modes of knowledge Christ already had at his disposal and the ways in which Christ gained knowledge may have been different based on infused knowledge, which is not necessarily an effect of the Hypostatic Union but of divine grace (such that it is, in principle, a gift that can be given to other human beings as well). Only the range of Christ's knowledge – Pawl follows Aquinas – might be much broader than any version of infused knowledge we, as human beings, might ever encounter, for this knowledge is instrumental to the Hypostatic Union (but not an effect of it). Unfortunately, Pawl is focused primarily on the foreknowledge problem – this time related to the foreknowledge of Christ (pp. 179-182) and to the infallible as well as perfect features of Christ's knowledge. Thus, the following chapters are predominantly concerned with how we can reconcile Christ's foreknowledge not just with our but also with his own freedom. After one has read the chapter on Christ's freedom the answer proposed by Pawl is not surprising: freedom does not necessarily require deliberation or uncertainty regarding the future (pp. 203-222). Pawl's defense is a bit more technical than in the previous chapters since it requires a basic understanding of standard modal logic.

But, from a theological point of view, the adaptation of the foreknowledge problem to the knowledge of Christ is not the most intricate and pressing issue when we get into the muddier waters of exploring Christ's consciousness. Ever since two minds Christology has been around one wonders whether Jesus Christ has the mind of a mystic insofar as he was intimately connected to the Logos and enjoyed the beatific vision or whether he was like a split personality patient with a human and a divine intellect existing next to each other, being connected in a

nonsymmetrical way on occasion. One would have expected that Pawl gets immersed into contemporary theories of self-consciousness, talks about indexicals and self-reference in order to explore who Christ is referring to, when he uses the word 'I' and whether or not the Thomist solution – i.e. to give Christ's self-referring capacities and his attachment to the divine consciousness a purely externalist reading in order to avoid a monophysitist's fusion of consciousnesses at all costs – falls prey to a two sons solution. The problem of Christ's consciousness is worth further exploration since it has immediate theological consequences: if we fuse the divine and the human consciousness the human aspect will literally drown in the superior divine consciousness to whom every state of affairs in the world (and in possible worlds) is self-presenting. But if we keep the spheres of consciousness separate, we might have to face two selves in Christ – which would not be a viable solution either.

But, rather, Pawl spends his time with an applied version of the foreknowledge problem. His Thomistic solution, which basically wants to keep the idea of maximal and superior knowledge intact, is nevertheless not as innocent as it seems. For as some present-day adherents of Kenotic Christology have emphasized: is a human being that is equipped with perfect and infallible foreknowledge still a *human* being? This is a really good question, because to be morally flawless (i.e. impeccable) is one thing – and is still reconcilable with the framework of what makes us human (just imagine if Adam had never sinned) – but to talk about infallible and flawless knowledge destroys what makes us human: if infallibility includes that a person knows of *every* state of affairs *p* that it is true *as soon as it occurs*, this presupposes of mode of gaining knowledge which turns the world of states of affairs, as we human encounter it – with its mysteries yet to be detected and its many lessons to be learned – into a self-presenting body of immediate knowledge. Having to learn from mistakes, using abductive reasoning, having to rely on memory and interpretation, discussing issues for the sake of derivative knowledge and referring to sense perception is nothing immoral, it is not even a flaw or a defect, it is just the human way of getting to know things. If we strip off this side of gaining knowledge from the human nature of Christ, if we let the human knowledge be directed by the infallible divine knowledge, what makes Christ human – it would be his biology only, but not his psychology. Either we end up with the fusion of consciousnesses at the end of the day, or we fall prey to Apollinarianism. Pawl does not really go into the specific consciousness-related sides of the problem, but he may have a solution based on his interpretation of the two natures Christology. But here is the problem: if we add the schematics of Pawl's interpretation of the two natures approach to the picture, Christ's mindset resembles that of an ordinary computer which, based on his attachment to a quantum super-computer, has unusually powerful capacities that surpass the ordinary features of ordinary artificial intelligences by far – despite the fact that from the outside it appears to work like a usual computer. The difference to the average IT system is just its attachment to the quantum computer that provides instant access to perfect and infallible knowledge. But despite the average appearance of one half of the system the system as a whole is clearly not average. Now one could say, 'Well, that is exactly Christ's situation.' But two

natures Christology would say: 'No, it must not be, because both computers form one internal stream of data calculation which would render the average Computer a mere terminal to access the sheer unlimited capacities of the quantum computer.' The outside appearance of the run of the mill laptop notwithstanding, the average looking computer is just an access point to a much superior data stream and calculation machine, his own 'nature' is reduced to the surface of familiar apps and appearances. The problem of Christ's knowledge turns out to be much trickier than the problem of ascribing human attributes (like being able to suffer and die) to a being that is a 'composite' of the divine and the human nature. For there is an internal aspect to the notion of knowledge as defenders of a more traditional view of self-consciousness might point out. Again, if knowledge can be knowledge only because I am aware of what I know and if I am aware of how I gain knowledge, how can Christ remain fully human if he has unlimited access to infallible and perfect knowledge?

Permit me to introduce a (somewhat silly) thought experiment: let us assume, for the time being, that Jesus of Nazareth had to learn some basic classical Greek in order to work as a carpenter in the Mediterranean world. Could he have decided to skip classes and access infused knowledge instead? Could he benevolently have fooled his teachers, joined peers and passed tests in order to not rouse suspicions – like some Marvel superheroes have to do to keep their true identities hidden? Pawl's defense of Christ's perfect foreknowledge makes Christ look like a walking deity that based on humble and benevolent intentions pretends to make mistakes, to learn from perception and to experience the passions and feelings that are the all too human ways of being acquainted with the unknown. If Pawl wants to avoid these problems his proposal needs the inclusion of one or the other version of a two-minds Christology which might have as a consequence – I am using the computer analogy – that the quantum super-computer has access to the data bank of the average computer but not the other way round. But what would that do to the instrumental role of the human nature of Christ for salvation, since his salvific deeds presuppose that he embraces all suffering and darkness of every human being in his human nature? For these reasons contemporary theology has, almost across the full spectrum, stopped a long time ago to turn Christ's state of mind into an exercise in resolving the foreknowledge puzzles and has embraced versions of Kenotic Christology: adapting insights from Karl Rahner, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Thomas Pröpper and Klaus Müller I once proposed the idea that the only infallible certainty Christ has and needs – Aquinas notwithstanding – is the certainty of being 'one with the Father'. The only conscious-related feature Christ needs to fulfill his salvific work is to have a maximal empathy for the heart of every human being.

But now I cannot conclude the review of the last part without saying something about the method of analytic theology. While the first part of Pawl's book was refreshing and inspiring, because he engaged in discussions with a variety of theological positions, while the second part offered a transformative experience since Pawl got into a deep and careful assessment of human freedom, the third part of the book is just the hundredth discussion of the foreknowledge problem. My message is simple and a repetition of what I said earlier: please,

analytic philosophers, take theology seriously. Conciliar statements are a product of heated theological debates, of compromise and sometimes of bias. Their message has been received in certain ways that add to the meaning of these statements. They are neither mathematical axioms nor Chisholmian definitions, they are just markers to tell us where the river of our belief systems gets dangerous, leaving a lot of space in between for further interpretation. Usually, when theologians or fellow scientists from other areas try to say something philosophical, analytic philosophers tend to be rather impatient if such utterances are not expressed in a specific way of dealing with problems. The same is true for theology. Especially the last part of Pawl's book – the treatise of the knowledge of Christ – seems to be a lesson in the practice of modal logic, just another version of dealing with the problem of theistic fatalism and the compatibilism-incompatibilism stalemate, only this time exemplified through the lenses of Christology. In theology you cannot proceed like that: instead, you have to be aware of the history of problems and the *history of dealing* with these problems. For centuries theology has contemplated the problem of Christ's knowledge and consciousness. Late medieval and baroque scholasticism has transformed the Thomistic perspective severely, historical scholarship has seriously shaken the biblical foundation of ascribing perfect knowledge to Christ, idealistic theologians have developed versions of Kenotic Christology that are not in need of a perfect knowledge concept of Christ's mindset (but focused on perfect love and perfect goodness), and theologians like Karl Rahner found the whole problem to be rather 'radioactive' since we can imagine an ethical flawless being to still be human, while a being that has flawless knowledge transcends humanity so that not even a two natures approach can help us.

Knowing the history of treatises and the solution to the problems inquired in such treatises does not reveal the nowadays highly appraised metaphysical training and the ingenuity of coming up with conceptually elaborate solutions to certain problems, but it helps to avoid pitfalls that have been around for centuries. While contemporary theology can learn a lot from analytic clarity, the rigor of logic and the transparency of arguments, Analytic Theology must be willing to learn from theology in order to not repeat the mistakes of the past. There is a reason why the problem of Christ's knowledge has not been treated any longer. For if one adopts the maximalist Thomistic view as proposed and defended by Pawl – to be fair Pawl only defends the viability of this view and not that it is true – the basic Christological statement, 'Jesus of Nazareth is the Divine Word', would be proven wrong if a time traveler asked Jesus about the mysteries of quantum mechanics and Jesus might have answered (in Aramaic and neither in elegant Latin nor in modern day English): 'What are you talking about?' From a New Testament scholars' perspective this thought experiment would be a caricature of what is really relevant for the mindset of Christ, especially if we even consider the basic axioms of biblical theology concerning the soteriological core of messianic hopes and their (possible) fulfillments. But for Pawl, I guess, this thought experiment would be a troubling situation, another puzzle to be resolved. Should the time traveler ask Jesus to push a hidden button to access the 'divine quantum super-computer of perfect knowledge' by infused knowledge to develop an answer?

Should the time traveler assume that Jesus is just pretending to not know for he does not want to embarrass his fellow disciples and the world around him that did not even have a clue how Newtonian physics worked, let alone quantum theory? Or should the time traveler turn her back on Jesus like the people that could not understand that he was the 'bread of life'? Sometimes analytic theologians get carried away by the ingenuity of their models and the unlimited possibilities to apply them to endless versions of merely conceptual puzzles. Yet the specific status of Christ's knowledge is not primarily relevant because it can serve as another version to address the problems of theistic fatalism over and over again; it is relevant because Christ's knowledge is code for the chance that, at least, *one* human being made it, made it for us, and made it for all: to live a life in the immediate presence of God and to become the purest image of God.

Overall, Pawl's book is a valuable and important contribution to Analytic Theology. But the conceptual possibilities to develop appropriate models to do justice to Conciliar Christology are broader than the solutions Aquinas has offered. The fact that Pawl is more friendly to theological voices from the past and to those who were immersed in the Thomistic or scholastic traditions (up to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) while he remains skeptical when he approaches rather contemporary Christological developments which have become classics in their own right (I mentioned Rahner or Pannenberg, but we could easily add Edward Schillebeeckx, Hans Urs von Balthasar or Walter Kasper to the list) doesn't make the theological reception of the book easier although its topics and its methods have a lot to give to contemporary theological discussions. This book – let me conclude with a more programmatic remark – needs the company of the most charitable analytic reading of Christological reflections that have been developed in contemporary theology to show that the logical space for resolving the pressing problems of Christology is wider than the Thomistic framework. Within the choir of many voices, some of which have yet to be rehearsed to fit the standards of analytic theology, a defense of a Thomistic Christology is absolutely important.