

**Andrew Ter Ern Loke. *A Kryptic Model of the Incarnation*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2014. xiv +185 pp. \$119.95 (hbk).**

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Andrew Ter Ern Loke's *A Kryptic Model of the Incarnation* is a creative and bold contribution to the discussion of the metaphysics of the Incarnation within contemporary analytic theology. For those up to speed on this literature, Loke's book is a lot of fun. For those wishing to become proficient in this field, Loke's bibliography and literature review supplies much essential reading for a foray into this area of inquiry. In this review, I want to first offer my praise for Loke's project as a whole. Secondly, I provide a brief precis of the book. I will then offer an objection to Loke's characterization of a model of the Incarnation that competes with his own.

Loke's project, by self-attestation (12) and by my lights, falls squarely in the analytic theology stream of contemporary theology. Utilizing such tools as essential properties, perfect being theology, numbered propositions to compose arguments, and the like, Loke here sees analytic philosophy as a suitable handmaiden to his theological task. Further, Loke's major interlocutors, Richard Swinburne, Oliver Crisp, Thomas Morris, William Lane Craig, Brian Leftow, and many others likewise utilize the analytic approach. Thus his project fits well as a contribution to the growing body of literature pertaining to analytic approaches to the Incarnation.

Loke is also savvy to make use of contemporary psychology. While this is not essential to analytic theology, this evinces a similar approach to other fields of inquiry. If analytic theology simply says, "There are tools in contemporary analytic philosophy that might be appropriated for the theological task," then analytic theology is a species of a larger methodology that simply says, "There are tools in various disciplines that might be appropriated for the theological task." Loke finds tools within a psychoanalytic stream of contemporary psychology and within his larger appropriation-methodology, these tools work right alongside those from analytic philosophy.

An appeal of Loke's approach is that he cannot be accused of simply doing philosophical theology divorced from Scripture or the Christian tradition. His parenthetical references make clear that Loke is at pains to ensure that his model of the Incarnation fits with the Scriptural witness to Jesus Christ. His approach is no mere musing on a religious theme, rather he sees himself as explicating the exegetical realities of Scripture, even according to historical-critical methodology. Further, Loke is sensitive to the historical development of the theological concepts latent in Scripture. He frequently makes reference to the Ecumenical councils and has a lengthy treatment of Maximus the Confessor's discussion of Christ's wills. What is

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more, he engages directly with twentieth-century theological sources, an area analytics are occasionally accused of overlooking.

The traditional view of the Scriptural portrayal of Christ as handed down by the Creeds, councils, liturgies, and theologies of the Christian church has been to view Christ as God Incarnate, one person with two natures. Christ is a unified person who is both God and a human in virtue of the fact that Christ possesses both the divine nature and an instance of human nature. But, how can one person have two natures? Loke attempts an articulation that he feels navigates between some potential pitfalls of other contemporary models. I think wisely Loke sets himself up for the only modest project of articulating a “*possible* model of the Incarnation” (13). In his dialectic, his opponent has the much stiffer challenge of showing that the traditional view on the Incarnation entails a contradiction. “However, for the purpose of rebutting the charge of incoherence, all that is required is not to provide an actual model of the Incarnation (‘It was like this ...’), but to provide a possible model to show how it is not impossible that the apparently contradictory properties coexist in the same person (‘It could have been like this ...’)” (10).

Loke situates his proposal against competing versions of Christology, including various varieties of Kenoticism, a Divine Subconscious model first articulated by William Sandy, and Two Consciousness models of the Incarnation. His own view of “Kryptic” Christology (from *krypsis*, “hiding” in Greek) is that “in a certain sense the supernatural properties of God incarnate were concealed (‘veiled’) during the Incarnation” (20).<sup>1</sup> Loke expositis Kryptic Christology according to, what he calls, the Divine Preconscious Model (DPM), which he thinks avoids some of the deficiencies of the other discussed models. All along, the discussion of these models is framed by an analysis of key divine attributes such as omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. Loke’s analysis of these concepts is very well-informed, thorough, and always at the service of the Christological telos of the project.

As an introduction to stating his model, Loke helpfully provides definitions to a number of key terms. He culls definitions for the psychological terms employed Colman’s *Dictionary of Psychology*. Loke defines such key terms as: “conscious” (“that which, when it is active, exhibits a mental condition characterized by the experience of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, awareness of the external world and, often in humans, self-awareness” (65)); “subconscious” (“mental contents which exist outside of consciousness ... thoughts, desires, emotions and even sensations and perceptions” (65)); “preconscious” (“mental contents that are not currently in consciousness but are accessible to consciousness by directing attention to them” (66)).

With these terms in place, Loke deploys the model. The DPM states that at the Incarnation, the divine attributes of the Logos (such as the Logos’ omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence) were pushed into the Logos’ divine preconscious, while a human nature was assumed that included a human preconscious. Loke calls the former “part A” of Christ’s preconscious and the latter “part B” of his preconscious.

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<sup>1</sup> I note in passing that Loke repeatedly refers to God or the divine nature possessing “properties,” this language might make some proponents of divine simplicity uncomfortable. Loke’s later denial of divine simplicity and acquiescence to the notion of abstract entities outside God’s control will cause even greater discomfort to divine simplicity advocates (84-5).

The two minds of Christ (his divine mind and human mind) share one consciousness. But Christ has a full divine nature (“in virtue of the aspect of his consciousness having access to the divine preconscious [part A], thus continuing to possess all the essential divine properties which he had from eternity” (70)) and a full human nature (“in virtue of the aspect of his consciousness which had human properties, the human preconscious [part B], and human body” (70)). Loke is clear that he wants to understand natures here along concretist lines, where natures are concrete particulars. So, once the Incarnation occurs, Christ is composed of three parts: (1) the concrete divine nature and the concrete human nature, the latter of which is composed of (2) Christ’s human body and (3) Christ’s human soul.

Loke thinks that the preconscious motif of three part concrete nature Christology avoids Nestorian tendencies of the Two Consciousness concrete models, avoids Apollinarian tendencies of the abstract nature models, and avoids the troubles of Kenoticism that might seem to evacuate Christ of his full divinity. His model is Kryptic because it holds that the divine attributes of the Incarnate Christ are hidden in the divine preconscious, fully accessible (so he still possesses them) but hidden from view in the sense that Christ does not (or rarely does) access them.

There is much to commend in Loke’s thorough and creative analysis of the Incarnational metaphysics. I offer here a bit of pushback in support of Two Consciousness models, which Loke juxtaposes against his one consciousness model. Loke situates his project as remedying certain pitfalls of this rival view. Two Consciousness models can be understood with concrete nature or abstract nature ontologies underpinning them.<sup>2</sup> But since Loke adopts concretism, I will use that perspective to see if the Two Consciousness model along concrete nature lines can avoid one of Loke’s objections. The worries Loke has with Two Consciousness views is that (a) they actually entail three consciousnesses and (b) they entail an I-thou relation between Christ’s natures, which indicates personhood for each nature, which entails Nestorianism. However, I am not so sure that either (a) or (b) follow from two consciousnesses; I will here just focus on (a).

Two natures Christology attempts to remedy apparent contradictions in Christ, for instance the notion that Christ does not know the day of his second coming (Mark 13:32, Loke 47) and yet, being God, Christ should be omniscient. The standard line is that Christ does not know the day according to his human nature, but does know the day according to his divine nature. But, so Loke argues, if one attends to the self-consciousness of the knower in this instance, one arrives at these contradictory states of affairs:

- 1) The human consciousness of his human nature in which the Logos might say ‘I am not aware of myself being consciously aware of the day of my coming.’
- 2) The divine consciousness of his divine nature in which the Logos might say ‘I am aware of myself being consciously aware of day of my coming.’

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<sup>2</sup> For instance, Loke cites abstractists like Morris and Swinburne and a concretist like Crisp as all holding to this view.

- 3) The subject consciousness of the Logos in which he might say 'I am aware of myself being consciously unaware of the day of my coming in my human nature, and aware of myself being consciously aware of the day of my coming in my divine nature, at one-and-the-same time.' (48)

Thus, or so Loke thinks, if the Christologist posits two consciousnesses in Christ, the Christologist ends up being committed to three consciousnesses, and this is much too confusing, "This seems to make the problem worse rather than solving it, for now we have three different and contradictory self-consciousnesses ... which seems to imply three selves" (48).

It is not entirely clear to me that Loke has given his audience a clear understanding of how conscious is related to nature. For suppose one thought of concrete natures as essentially having a specific concrete set of capacities and powers, a "power-pack" so to speak. That is, natures have certain capacities and powers that enable the possessor of them to perform certain kind actions. So, the alligator nature endows the possessor of it to crush an entire chicken with its jaws, the possessor of a human nature enjoys no such capacity.

The divine nature endows a possessor of it, say the Holy Spirit, to be omnipotent. The nature is not omnipotent, rather the Holy Spirit is omnipotent in virtue of its possession of the divine nature. A human nature, say mine, endows me the ability to hold a fish over a fire. My human nature also endows me with the capacity for eating said fish. The Holy Spirit, due to its divine-nature-endowed omnipotence, has the ability to hold a fish over a fire as well. However, the Holy Spirit is unable to eat the fish it has cooked, for the divine nature endows the Holy Spirit with no such capacities for chewing, swallowing, or, digestion. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is *divinely* able to hold a fish over a fire (perhaps via some kind of levitation), but the Holy Spirit is unable to *humanly* hold a fish over a fire (via a hand holding onto a stick, say).

Oddly enough, when one has two natures, one has two sets of power-packs, two sets of capacities, and some of these might overlap. They are not the same capacity, because on the concrete nature view the capacity is keyed to the nature. So, Christ, God Incarnate, one person with two natures, has some capacities twice over. One could ask of Christ, "can you hold a fish over fire?" To which Christ can respond "yes" twice over, he could hold a fish over fire via a *divinely* levitation (as with the Holy Spirit in the example above) and he could *humanly* hold a fish over fire (via his hand holding a stick). Christ needs to respond doubly as well in contradictory instances, "can you eat a flame-broiled fish?" "Yes," Christ can *humanly* eat fish, but "no" he cannot *divinely* eat fish.

This analysis of natures and capacities shows that Loke has to revise his account of the Two Consciousness approach to knowledge and self-awareness, if this is understood with a concrete nature metaphysical infrastructure. Thus, the words Loke puts in Christ's mouth ought to be revised as such:

- 1) "I am humanly aware of myself being humanly unaware of the day of my coming."

- 2) "I am divinely aware of myself being divinely aware of the day of my coming."
- 3) "I am divinely aware of myself being humanly unaware of the day of my coming."

Christ's capacity for awareness is keyed to his natures. That Christ is both aware and unaware of the day of his coming might seem like a contradiction on the face of things, but with two natures (and thus two *kinds* of awareness) this does not entail a contradiction. Christ cannot just "be aware" of something, he has to do so in virtue of one or other of his natures. Thus his "awareness" will always be modified by which *kind* of capacity is operating. Yet there is only ever one "I" in these statements, Christ is the possessor of his awareness, just as he is the possessor of his natures.

Is it a contradiction for some one entity to exercise contradictory capacities? I do not think so and even a mundane example from the differing roles that we humans take on can show this. For example, suppose you were about to be arrested for embezzling funds from your family's construction company, I might say something like: "Look, as your lawyer I advise you to turn yourself in, but as your friend I advise you to go live it up down ol' South America way." The various roles modify my capacity for the action in question. I *lawyer-ly* advise you to turn yourself in, but I *friend-ly* advise you to flee the country. Clearly these are contradictory bits of advice and yet it is no contradiction for me to offer them both to you because I offer them in virtue of my differing roles viz. our relationship. Of course, this is just an illustration, for I do not have a *lawyer* and a *friend* nature, but if the illustration holds with respect to an individual who has different roles, it should be even easier to see how this would play out should an individual have two natures. Presumably the divine nature includes the capacity for consciousness, presumably the human nature includes the capacity for consciousness as well, Christ has the divine nature and a concrete instance of human nature. Thus, Christ can have two consciousnesses, but it is only ever the one Christ who operates those consciousnesses.

This is not devastating for Loke's model. He does not need Two Consciousness models to fail in order for his model to be viable. But his motivation for abandoning a position well-attested in the current literature might here seem to be a bit diminished. Despite this, Loke's own constructive work is creative, bold, and well-worth further interaction by those engaged in the contemporary analytic Christology conversation.