

The Revived Apollinarianism of Moreland and Craig
In Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview (IVP, 2003)

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Introduction

Apollinarianism is a view of the humanity of Christ. The name is derived from Apollinaris [Apollinarius], a Trinitarian theologian (310-391 AD) who taught that in the incarnation, God the Son (the Word, the Logos) assumed an *incomplete* human nature lacking mind and will. Similarly, Moreland and Craig (MC) state: “The Logos was the rational soul of Jesus of Nazareth.”¹ MC are Protestant Christian philosophers at Talbot School of Theology. They agree with the critics of Apollinaris that his view was defective in that it undercut the work of Christ because He assumed only an animal nature and thus could not redeem humanity. They recognize that the key problem is the lack of a complete human nature; their revived version seeks to remedy that lack. Apollinarianism was condemned at the council of Chalcedon in 451AD.² According to Albert Schweitzer in his important book of 1910, *The Quest of a Historical Jesus*, Chalcedon’s doctrine of the two natures (that Christ is fully God and fully man) “dissolved the unity of the Person, and thereby cast off the last possibility of a return to the historical Jesus...This dogma [of Christ as completely God and completely man] had first to be shattered before men could once more go out in quest of the historical Jesus (p. 3). Therefore, a summary of the Chalcedonian creed is necessary background for an evaluation of the view of MC since they seek to “shatter” (or tweak and upgrade) the confession of Chalcedon, at least in part, regarding its affirmation of the complete humanity of Christ that is contained in its rejection of Apollinarianism.³

I. A summary of the Chalcedonian Creed from Philip Schaff in *The Creeds of Christendom*

A. First, consider Chalcedon’s rejection of Apollinarianism

“We...teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus...perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God *and truly man, of a rational soul and body...in all things like unto us* without sin...to be acknowledged in two natures...the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person.” Chalcedon continues: “one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, [is] to be acknowledged in two natures, *inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably*; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person.”⁴ This is

¹ *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (hereafter, PF), 608.

² Chalcedon was located near modern day Istanbul in Turkey.

³ Granted, MC do not have the same aim as those of the quest, namely, to find a *merely human* historical Jesus; still, they block our view of the historical Jesus who is completely God and completely man joined in one person, the second person of the trinity.

⁴ II, 62. We should remember that the church, both Catholic and Protestant, has embraced the Chalcedonian Creed as vital to her understanding of the Lord of the church. Granting that no creed is equal to Scripture, its importance as a beacon of light for our present journey is immense. In this connection, Berkouwer says, “The ancient church weeded its garden and produced much fruit” but “in later times people have tried by means of more refined concepts to override the decision of the ancient church. But the result was nearly always that in contending with the words of the church the polemicist actually clashed with what the church intended, namely, to confess that Christ was truly God and truly man, and not to offer a scientific formulation of the mystery of the incarnation” and this is not mere traditionalism, “on the contrary, it is to have rapport with the living past in which the church went neither to the right nor to the left in defending the biblical message concerning Jesus Christ, the Word, who became flesh,” G. C. Berkouwer, *The Person of Christ*, 70-71.

truly a mystery; **great indeed** per 1 Tim 3.16.⁵ Compare *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, 21: “The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man and so was, and continues to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever.” The *Westminster Confession* builds on Chalcedon by speaking of “one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion.”⁶

B. Second, consider some comments by Schaff on the key terms and ideas of Chalcedon

1. On the distinction between nature and person

Nature “denotes the totality of powers and qualities which constitute a being” while person “is the Ego, the self-conscious, self-asserting and acting subject.” Thus, in the incarnation, “The Logos assumed, not a human person (else we would have two persons, a divine and a human), but human nature which is common to us all.”⁷

2. On the God-man as the result of the incarnation

Christ is not a double being, with two persons, nor a compound middle being that is neither divine nor human; “He is *one person both divine and human*.”⁸

3. On the unity of the person⁹: “The two natures constitute but one personal life, and yet remain distinct.” “The self-consciousness of Christ is never divided; his person consists in such a union of the human and the divine natures, that the divine nature is the seat of self-consciousness, and pervades and animates the human.” Therefore, “The person is the acting subject” so, “the whole work of Christ is to be attributed to his person” and “the infinite merit of the Redeemer’s work must be ascribed to his person because of his divinity; while it is his humanity alone that made him capable of, and liable to...suffering and death.”

II. Modern psychology in MC’s revived Apollinarianism

In anticipation, as it were, of MC, Schaff says that the view of Chalcedon is seriously inadequate “if we view it in the light of our modern psychology.”¹⁰ He then cites many 19th century theologians who charge Chalcedon with a “defective psychology.”¹¹ Interestingly, a modern model from “depth psychology” is the jumping off point for MC: “We postulate that the divine aspects of Jesus’ personality were largely subliminal during his state of humiliation...the subliminal self is the primary locus of the superhuman elements in the consciousness of the incarnate Logos...the human consciousness of Jesus was underlain, as it were, by a divine

⁵ 1 Tim 3.16: **Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.** The human mind will never be able to exhaust the character of this mystery, accordingly, as Oliphint says, the four negative of Chalcedon (inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably) “are meant only to insure that our thinking about this one person is biblical; on “unchangeably” he helpfully states that this negative refers to the natures themselves: “The divine nature does not change...it cannot change, and the human nature does not change into something other than fully human (yet without sin)” K. Scott Oliphint, *God With Us: Divine Condescension and the Attributes of God* (Crossway, Wheaton, 2012), 140.

⁶ *Westminster Confession of Faith*: The Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature, with all the essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man (VIII, Of Christ the Mediator), 2

⁷ Creeds, I, 30.

⁸ Ibid., 31.

⁹ Ibid., 31-32.

¹⁰ Ibid., 32.

¹¹ Ibid., 33.

subconsciousness.” He had a waking consciousness that was typically human “while the bulk of his knowledge and other cognitive perfections like an iceberg beneath the water’s surface, lay submerged in his subconscious.”¹² Hence, the eternal Logos has deep springs of action of which He was only dimly aware.¹³

So, MC identify with Apollinaris and they affirm that there must be a single conscious subject that is both omniscient and yet limited in knowledge, which causes them to search for an explanation that avoids the “incoherence” of Chalcedon by avoiding things like “the monstrosity of the baby lying in the manger possessing the full divine consciousness.”¹⁴ For reformulation, they look to the view of Apollinaris claiming that his view is not necessarily that of a truncated human nature because he argued that the Logos was the archetypal man and thus “already possessed human nature in his preexistent form” and thus, MC argue: “in assuming a hominid body the Logos brought to Christ’s animal nature just those properties that would serve to make it a complete human nature.”¹⁵

III. Evaluative counter-thrust: there seems to be three main failures

A. First, MC fail to confess the complete humanity of the incarnate Logos

They are clear in stating that Jesus took an *incomplete* human nature (a body without mind or will) and completed it to become the incarnate Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁶ However, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the incarnate Christ is a third kind, a middle being, a *tertium quid*, *neither God nor man*. MC speak of the superhuman elements in the consciousness of the incarnate Logos; these elements, they say, are located in His subconsciousness.¹⁷ Still, on their view, elements of the Logos are joined with a hominid body to form a complete (a completed) human nature and give it personhood. If these qualities that join with the human body are elements of the eternal Son, are they not eternal, unchanging, and superhuman, even if they are archetypal human qualities? This means that the divine combines with a creaturely body to form a composite. This is surely a *tertium quid* for the eternal Son has a new composition that includes a conscious waking state (awake to His limits in the body of flesh) and a subconscious sleeping state (mostly asleep to His divine limitlessness). He consciously does not know the hour of His return while subconsciously He does know the hour and everything else.

Thus, despite their claims of a completed *human* nature, Jesus of Nazareth is not fully man because He is something more than a man, as a mixture of preexistent perfections of the Logos, albeit archetypal human qualities, with a mindless hominid body. This is hardly faithful to the biblical record since it involves a denial in principle of the deity of the Son (for qualities of deity cannot become something else), as well as a denial in principle of His coming in the flesh in all respects (because the composition of preexistent eternal properties with a physical body must result in something more than human). His body is not fully human before this union

¹² PF, 611.

¹³ PF, 611.

¹⁴ PF, 612; this monstrosity view depends on their rejection of reduplicative predication.

¹⁵ PF, 608.

¹⁶They think this is theologically advantageous because “it aborts the suggestion that the Logos could have assumed just any human nature, so that Ronald Reagan...could have been the Son of God,” PF, 610. However, their view is hardly necessary for this abortion because Reagan had a human father; Jesus had no human father. MC have lost sight here of the uniqueness of Christ.

¹⁷ PF, 610.

occurs and by this union the body is deified. The incarnate Son is now not God because of change (into a *tertium quid*) and He is not man but a superman.¹⁸

There are other complications as well. The idea that Christ somehow possessed human properties in His preexistent state is a strikingly ambiguous notion, at the least, since it suggests the existence of human qualities within the Godhead. Claiming that these qualities are archetypal does little to remove the ambiguity of some kind of pre-temporal divine-human confluence. Then, it is said, these archetypal properties of the eternal Logos combine with a physical body to become the limited and imperfect conscious self of Jesus of Nazareth with His perfections buried in His sleeping subconsciousness. So, either we have the odd view of God with human properties before the incarnation or the archetypal properties are divine properties which combine with a physical body into a middle being that is neither God nor man.¹⁹

Accordingly, the eternal and unchanging Logos unites with a body to become a person that has limited and changing properties. Of course, the notion here of change for the divine person is impossible and the entire direction of this revived Apollinarianism of MC undercuts the gospel for unless Jesus has come in the flesh and is truly and fully human (not more than nor less than human), He cannot save fallen humans.²⁰ This seems to be a huge failure, to say the least.

B. Second, MC fail to ground their view exegetically

A vital evaluative question has to do with the way Scripture drives the authors in this attempt to improve upon the work of Chalcedon. Such an attempt ought to be done judiciously given that the creed was formulated by a multitude of men who studied the New Testament in earnest, seeking do full justice to all the elements of its portrait of Christ. This is especially so, because, as Warfield puts it, “The final statement is not a product of the study, therefore, but of life; and was arrived at, externally considered, through protracted and violent controversies, during the course of which every conceivable construction of the biblical data had been exploited, weighed, and its elements of truth sifted out and preserved, while the elements of error which deformed it were burned up as chaff in the fires of the strife.”²¹ Therefore, what Warfield says of psychological views of his day is true of this attempted upgrade of Apollinaris by MC: “The ‘subliminal self,’” he says, “is only another name for the subconscious self; and the relegation of the divine in Jesus to the realm of the unconscious definitely breaks with the entire historical testimony.”²² MC give no exegetical basis for their departure from Chalcedon regarding “our Lord Jesus...truly God *and truly man, of rational soul and body...in all things like unto us* without sin...to be acknowledged in two natures...concurring in one Person.”

¹⁸ Could He be a man and something more than a man without being a superman (like a person being a man and a biologist)? Of course, Christ is a man and a prophet. However, even MC’s view of the relation of soul and body is such that the soul is essentially the person and the soul animates every part of the body and thus the whole is some kind of composite. For them, the human, the incarnate Logos, has the waking human consciousness and a subliminal subconsciousness that they affirm is a unit, which is thus a composite. Thus the “man,” the incarnate Logos who has no human soul (and thus is less than a man) has a subconsciousness that has divine qualities making Him more than a man regarding His properties of true humanity. Further, as a superman, His soul would animate His entire body making it incapable of death since the soul of the body has supernatural properties. Why wouldn’t the soul in its unity (conscious and subconscious) not so affect (govern) the body in every way?

¹⁹ What else can be said, if by the incarnation, the second person of trinity comes to have springs of action of which He is only dimly aware (cf. PF, 611)?

²⁰ “...there is absolutely no question that what orthodox christology has always taught is that God came down in the second person of the Trinity, who was and remains fully God, and he took on created attributes and properties without thereby in any way changing his essential deity,” this is “God’s condescension...while we cannot comprehend just what it means for one person fully to possess two distinct natures, we must affirm it in order for the gospel, in its fullest biblical sense from Genesis to Revelation, to be what it is.” Oliphint, *God With Us*, 122.

²¹ “Recent Christological Speculation” in *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1950) 216.

²² *Ibid.*, 261. The historical testimony to which he refers is the New Testament.

Schaff is helpful in this connection regarding the picture of our Lord in the Gospels, “Christ appears as a full human personality, thinking, speaking, acting like a man (only without sin), distinguishing himself from other men and from his heavenly Father...on the other hand, he appears just as clearly in the Gospels as a personality in the most intimate, unbroken, mysterious life-union with his heavenly Father, in full consciousness of a personal preexistence before the creation, of having been sent by the Father from heaven into this world, of living in heaven even during this earthly abode, and of being ever one with him in will and in essence.”²³ Accordingly, Jesus speaks of Himself, self-consciously, as a man: (Jn 8.40: **you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God**) and He tells us that He does not know the hour of His return (Mk 13.32). Yet, to Nathanael he said, **Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you** (Jn 1.48). Furthermore, on His personal preexistence, He speaks of Himself before He became a man: (Jn 8.58, **before Abraham was, I am**; Jn 17.5, **Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed** and 17.24, **you loved me before the foundation of the world**). He is self-conscious of His intertrinitarian existence before the creation of the world and He speaks of His present oneness with the Father: **I and the Father are one** (Jn 10.30). To be sure, there is some kind of duality in His consciousness, a duality that pertains to His two distinct natures, but it is a single consciousness that demands only wonder and awe: this person, a single acting subject, is conscious of, and speaks seamlessly of, His humanity and His deity; this is the historical Jesus of the New Testament.²⁴ Contrary to MC, our Lord’s *waking consciousness* includes His awareness as one person of being both fully God and fully man; thus, He affirms that no one knows the Father except the Son (Mat 11.30).

C. Third, MC fail to value the principle of reduplicative predication²⁵

By this principle we speak of properties that the second person of the trinity has with respect to each nature. Some comments on alloeosis and monotheletism should sufficiently illustrate the failure of MC and show why discussing reduplicative predication is important.

1. Monotheletism

MC state that their view entails monotheletism (condemned by the church at Constantinople in 680 AD). Their treatment of Luke 22.42 (not my will but yours be done) is telling for they refute the use of this text by the supporters of dyotheletism by misrepresentation. They simply dismiss the argument for two wills with the cavalier comment that two wills are not revealed in Luke 22.42 because Jesus was not talking to Himself.²⁶ Contrary to MC, Jesus per His human nature has a will that is different from the Father’s, but importantly, in terms of His membership in the trinity, His will cannot be different from that of the Father and the Spirit: what He wills they will, and what they will He wills in perfect harmony. Otherwise, there would be change in the essential and unchanging properties of the Godhead, which is impossible. Thus, monotheletism involves a radical alteration in God, such that He would no longer be God because Jesus speaks of what He wills that is different from the Father’s will. This shows that the incarnate Christ must have two wills. The will He has according to His humanity could differ from the Father’s will *and* it could be subordinated to the Father’s will. The will He has according to His deity cannot differ from the Father’s will; there is no essential subordination in

²³ Creeds, I, 33.

²⁴ Hence, Warfield can rightly say, The alternatives which we are really face to face with are, Either the two-natured Christ of history, or-a strong delusion (concocted by those going in quest on the foundation of anti-supernaturalism, Warfield, *Ibid.*, 262.

²⁵ For a philosophical defense of this principle see Eleonore Stump’s chapter on “The Metaphysics of the Incarnation” in her significant work *Aquinas* (New York: Routledge, 2003) 407-426.

²⁶ PF, 611.

the eternal trinity. In the *pactum salutis* (the plan of salvation), the triune God willed in perfect harmony that the eternal Son would take flesh to Himself and the members of the trinity agreed and willed that in Christ's full humanity, as incarnate God, He would have the place of submission to do the work on earth required to save the people given to Him in the plan of salvation.

2. *Alloeosis*

Opposing the reduplicative strategy, MC speak of the monstrosity of a baby in possession of omniscience.²⁷ By contrast, if we use this strategy, we can affirm that *God the Son* was a baby possessing the limited property of ignorance *with respect to His human nature*, while at the same time *He* (the second person of the trinity) was omniscient *with respect to His divine nature*. Without lessening the mystery here, it is intuitively Christian to affirm both because it is the same person, the second person of the Trinity that is the ignorant baby *and* that has omniscience.

To assert that He had omniscience as a baby in terms of His human babyhood as done by MC is to think improperly of the relationship of His two natures in the manner of Zwingli's idea of *alloeosis*, which means that it was not God that died on the cross but the human nature of Christ that died; the divine nature not being subject to death.²⁸ The problem here of Zwingli's view for Luther is simple: "If it should no longer be said: God died for us, but, instead, only a man [only human nature], then we are lost," but because God and man are united in the one person of Christ, it is true: "God suffered" and "God died."²⁹ Thus, reduplicative predication is a model that helps us do justice to the work of Christ by the one person who could not die as God but who did die as man; it enables us to speak of an intercommunication between the natures *by reference to His person* and to understand to some degree what Luke means when he speaks of the purchase of the church by the blood of God.³⁰ However, Lutheran theology *overcompensates* by attributing properties of the divine nature to the human nature to thus arrive at the doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ's body, a teaching that is foundational to their view of the presence of the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Overcompensating, they confuse the natures.

However, by reduplicative predication that is by and large spurned by MC, we can wholeheartedly affirm that all that Jesus did as a man in His life, death, and resurrection was done by the second person of the Holy Trinity. Thus, using this method of predication, the Heidelberg Catechism can meaningfully speak of Christ's continuing work as risen Lord: "As a man he is no longer on earth, but in his divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit, he is never absent from us."³¹ With respect to His complete humanity, God the Son died to save His people from their sins; with respect to His complete deity, God the Son bore the infinite punishment required

²⁷ PF, 612.

²⁸ Cf. Berkouwer's treatment of the idea of *alloeosis* and the Lutheran response to it, *The Person of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954) 276-280.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 277.

³⁰ Cf. The Westminster Confession of Faith: Christ, in the work of mediation, acts according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself; yet, by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature, VIII, 7.

³¹ The Heidelberg Catechism, answer to Q 47. Jesus thus says, "I will come to you after I depart" regarding the present time between His resurrection and return at the end of the age. This majestic person is aware that seated at the right hand of the Father in a limited body, He will ever remain present with His church in perfect union with the Holy Spirit because He is one person, the second person of the Holy Trinity.

for our salvation.³² Further, it is surely correct to affirm that the very gospel is at stake here because the children given to the pre-incarnate Christ **share in flesh and blood [therefore] he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death and deliver them from slavery; therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people** (Heb 2.13-17).

Conclusion

One reviewer says that MC “continue to distinguish themselves...by doing an outstanding job of defending the truth claims of Christianity” and of this book, “This well organized and luminiferous volume reflects the authors’ commitment to intellectual integrity and intellectual honesty.”³³ He also notes that they convincingly reject what they call the Thomistic doctrine of divine simplicity.³⁴ It appears that despite the effort they expend to place themselves within the bounds of historic Christian faith, they surely place themselves outside, perhaps barely outside, the margins of orthodoxy on a number of issues including the true and full humanity of Christ, divine simplicity, and dyotheletism in favor of monotheletism. These facts raise legitimate concerns about the defense of *Christian* theism by these authors and about their development of a *Christian* worldview. Moreover, for all the emphasis on philosophical and intellectual integrity, they offer a much less satisfying account of a human being, one that according to Calvin philosopher, Christian Van Dyke, “does so at the cost of excluding physicality almost entirely from what it means to be human” and thus they offer an “upgrade” of the view of Aquinas that weakens the philosophical argument for the resurrection of the body.³⁵ Nonetheless, MC are strong adherents of critical thought, advancing the notion, for example, that understanding of God’s nature is best sought in analytical philosophy and in the writings of philosophers rather than in the writings of theologians.³⁶ This all should give us pause and caution in the use we make of the writings of MC. While we must acknowledge much good in their endeavors, we should add that if Chalcedon confesses a good confession of faith, then the conclusion is inescapable: the revived Apollinarianism of MC adds glazing to the portrait of Jesus in the Gospels, and their doctrine, to a significant extent, blocks our view of the historical Jesus of the New Testament, who is one person, completely God, completely man, and thereby the Savior of sinful man.

³² No doubt it is difficult to conceive of two complete and perfect natures united in one person; but that once conceived, all that the Scriptures say of Jesus follows as a matter of course. He within whom dwells both an infinite and a finite mind, both at every moment of time knows all things and is throughout all time advancing in knowledge. There is mystery enough attaching to the conception; but it is the simple and pure mystery of the Incarnation-without which a real Incarnation would be inconceivable. The glory of the Incarnation is that it presents to our adoring gaze, not a humanized God or a deified man, but a true God-man, one who is all that God is and at the same time all that man is: on whose almighty arm we can rest, and to whose human sympathy we can appeal. It may be much to say that it is because he is man that he is capable of growth in wisdom, and because he is God that he is from the beginning Wisdom itself. It is more to say that because he is man he is able to pour out his blood, and because he is God his blood is of infinite value to save; and that is only because he is both God and Man in one person, that we can speak of God purchasing his Church with his own blood (Acts xx. 28). Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings-I* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970) 165-166.

³³ Bruce Little (Faith and Mission, 21 no 3 Sum 2004) 122.

³⁴ Ibid., 123.

³⁵ “Not Properly Person: The Rational Soul and ‘Thomistic Substance Dualism,’” in Faith and Philosophy (Vol 26 No 2 April 2009) 203-204.

³⁶ In this connection, see the references to Craig in God With Us, Oliphint, 77-78.

To the glory of Jesus, a son of the patriarchs according to the flesh **who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen** (Rom 9.5).