

The Humility of the Eternal Son

The Chalcedonian Definition of 451 never completely resolved one of the critical issues at the heart of Christianity: the unity of the “person” of Christ. In this eagerly awaited volume – the result of deep and sustained reflection – distinguished theologian Bruce Lindley McCormack examines the reasons for this philosophical and theological failure. His book serves as a critical history that traces modern attempts at resolution of this problem, from the nineteenth-century Lutheran emphasis on Kenoticism (or the “self-emptying” of the Son as ‘de-potential’) to post-Barthian efforts that evade the issue by collapsing the second person of the Trinity into the human Jesus – thereby rejecting altogether the logic of the classical “two-natures” Christology. McCormack shows how New Testament Christologies both limit and authorize ontological reflection, and in so doing offers a distinctively Reformed version of Kenoticism. Proposing a new and bold divine ontology, with a convincing basis in Christology, he persuasively argues that the unity of the “person” is in fact guaranteed by the Son’s act of taking into his “being” the lived existence of Jesus.

Bruce Lindley McCormack is Charles Hodge Professor of Systematic Theology at the Princeton Theological Seminary.

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The Humility of the Eternal Son

Reformed Kenoticism and the Repair of Chalcedon

BRUCE LINDLEY MCCORMACK

Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey



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Cambridge University Press & Assessment
 978-1-108-99984-7 — The Humility of the Eternal Son
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CAMBRIDGE
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Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
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 a department of the University of Cambridge.

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 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108999847

DOI: 10.1017/9781009000123

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First published 2021

First paperback edition 2023

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data

NAMES: McCormack, Bruce L., author.

TITLE: The humility of the eternal son : “reformed” kenoticism and the repair of
 Chalcedon / Bruce Lindley McCormack, Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY, USA : Cambridge
 University Press, 2021. | Series: Current issues in theology | Includes bibliographical
 references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2020055147 (print) | LCCN 2020055148 (ebook) | ISBN
 9781316518298 (hardback) | ISBN 9781009000123 (ebook)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Jesus Christ – History of doctrines. | Incarnation – History of
 doctrines. | Jesus Christ – Humiliation – History of doctrines.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC BT198 .M3984 2021 (print) | LCC BT198 (ebook) |
 DDC 232–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020055147>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020055148>

ISBN 978-1-316-51829-8 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-99984-7 Paperback

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The author would like to acknowledge Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, Wm. B. Eerdmans
 Co. and Ignatius Press for their kind permission to use selected excerpts from their
 publications.

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For Catriona Keyes McCormack

For God's Being-ever-greater [*das Je-immer-grösser Gottes*] is shown precisely [in denying Himself] in the mystery of redemption, in which He empties Himself ever more [*das Je-immer-mehr-Nichts-wird*] (Phil.2:7), and in that He is the one who ascends ever higher [*der Je höher Aufsteigende*] as the one who descends ever more deeply [*der Je tiefer Absteigende*] (Eph.4:9). Thus, one transcends oneself [*das je-über-binaus des Menschen*] to the degree that one descends with Him and in Him, the one who descends ever deeper, in "service" to the ever greater God.

— Erich Przywara, *Crucis Mysterium*, 48. Translation by John Betz.

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Acknowledgments

In the writing of this book, I have accumulated a number of debts which should be acknowledged. The occasion for the first version of this work was the T.F. Torrance Lectures, which I delivered in St. Andrews, Scotland in December 2007. To Thomas Torrance's son Iain, I am indebted for a great number of kindnesses. But my sincere gratitude is to him on this occasion due to the fact that it was his invitation (as the editor of the *Scottish Journal of Theology*) which allowed me to give the very first series of lectures held in his father's honor. And it is in his edited series that this book now appears.

The years that followed saw the work of revision slowed due to two more lectureships and a heavy PhD advisory load at Princeton Seminary. I only seriously began with work of revising and extending my material as the Frederick J. Crossan Fellow at the University of Notre Dame's Center for Philosophy of Religion. Thanks are owed most especially to Michael Rae and Samuel Newlands, the Directors of the Center, for their willingness to have a theologian in their midst and the friendly support they gave to my work there. Notre Dame is a splendid place to work and I am grateful especially to John Betz and David Bentley Hart for rich theological exchanges and warm fellowship. Other members of the Notre Dame faculty also reached out to me. Francesca Murphy (who was present for at least one of my Torrance Lectures while still at Aberdeen) supported my research in kenotic Christologies even before my arrival in the Center. Kenneth Oakes' interest in Barth, von Balthasar and Bulgakov and readiness to talk about them over beers was much appreciated. Two of my colleagues in the Center in particular deserve my thanks for probing questions and suggestions: Kris McDaniel (Syracuse) and Jeff Brower

(Purdue). And to Joyce Zurawski, Administrator in the Department of Philosophy at Notre Dame, my warm thanks for her gracious welcome and her help in finding my way in the University and in South Bend generally.

The book was completed as the first task accomplished in the year I am currently spending as a Senior Fellow at the Alfried Krupp Wissenschaftskolleg in Greifswald, Germany. To Dr Christian Suhm, Academic Coordinator at the Kolleg and Prof. Dr. Ulla Bonas, Academic Director, my thanks for their consistently warm encouragement and support. Also to Prof. Dr. Heinrich Assel (University of Greifswald), who encouraged me to apply for this grant and who designed a seminar (for ordination candidates) specifically on the figures and themes treated in this work, my profound thanks.

Thanks are due to Dr. Mark Elliott (then Head of School at St. Mary's College, St. Andrews), who enabled me to workshop a number of my ideas on two separate occasions – and to Prof. Dr. Rinse Reeling Brouwer (now retired Miskotte/Breukelmann Professor of Theological Hermeneutics of the Bible at the Protestant Theological University in Amsterdam), who ensured that my ideas were discussed in a variety of forums.

A number of colleagues and friends have read portions of this work and some have given very helpful comments: in addition to the aforementioned John Betz, David Bentley Hart, Francesca Murphy, Kenneth Oakes and Heinrich Assel, mention should be made of the following: Christoph Schwöbel, Friederike Nüssel, Adam Neder, Matthew Bruce, Chris Tilling, Joseph Scrivner and Matthew Puffer. Joseph Scrivner also provided me with much needed scans of portions of works in English that could not be found here in Germany. To all of them, my warm thanks.

Finally (and most importantly), my debts to Alexandra Pârvan are many and profound but one especially deserves mention here. She finally convinced me, after seven years of sustained critical engagement, that our “psychological ontology” was indeed a version of metaphysics – albeit not the “revisionary metaphysics” to which I am customarily assigned by certain critics.

Dr. Beatrice Rehl has been my editor at Cambridge University Press. It was a delight to work with her. The indexes were prepared by Mr. Eric Tuttle, PhD candidate at Princeton Theological Seminary. He it was who also did all of the reformatting of the text to bring it into conformity to Cambridge house style.

Thanks also go to all the members of my family (Mary, Catriona, and John), who have tolerated my absences largely without complaint – and

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my inability to be fully present to them at times when engaged with the work.

This book is dedicated to my daughter, Catriona Keyes McCormack – because her favorite Christian doctrine has always been Christology. Completely understandable in one who likes intellectual puzzles as much as she does.