While a number of objections to the doctrine of divine timelessness have been aimed at atemporalists in general, I discuss in this paper an objection to that doctrine aimed not at atemporalists in general but rather at Christian atemporalists. In so doing, I (i) examine two recent versions of this objection, arguing that they fail, and (ii) offer a suggestion as to how one can affirm both Christian orthodoxy and the doctrine of divine timelessness without thereby contradicting oneself.

I. The Objection from the Incarnation

Arguably, the doctrine which more than any other sets Christianity apart from other types of theism is the doctrine of the Incarnation, according to which Jesus Christ is God. About this doctrine, Thomas Morris writes, “The traditional doctrine of the Incarnation has as its central affirmation the claim that Jesus of Nazareth was one and the same person as God the Son, the

1By ‘doctrine of divine timelessness,’ I mean that doctrine according to which
(DT) For every time t, while God exists is true at t, it is not the case that God exists at t,
where ‘God’ is taken to be a title-phrase referring to the greatest possible being. (Those familiar with Nelson Pike’s God and Timelessness (New York: Schocken Books, 1970) will recognize the notion of a title-phrase as having been borrowed from the second chapter of that work.) I shall refer to those theists who endorse the doctrine of divine timelessness as ‘atemporalists’ and to those who deny it as ‘temporalists.’ Elsewhere I argue for a more complicated account of the central atemporalist claim, but (DT) is sufficient for my purposes here. For that more complicated account, see my “An Essay on Divine Presence” (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1997), 59-75; for a detailed discussion of the more prominent objections to the doctrine of divine timelessness which appear in the recent literature on God and time, including the objection from its alleged religious inadequacy, see ibid., 81-172.

2Here I assume that Christian orthodoxy itself is consistent so that, in affirming it, one is not thereby contradicting oneself. Of course, if it were not consistent, neither the atemporalist nor temporalist could consistently affirm both her position and Christian orthodoxy (though this would not count against her position).

3Perhaps the only other doctrine which can challenge it in this regard is that of the Trinity.
Second Person of the divine Trinity. In the case of Jesus, the tradition tells us, we are faced with one person in two natures—divine and human.”4 And, at least since the Council of Chalcedon in 451, orthodox Christians (or, at least, such Christians in the West) have taken this to mean that, while Jesus is consubstantial with God the Father in His divinity and with us in His humanity, His divine and human natures are neither changed, confused, divided, nor separated.5 Indeed, rather than being obliterated, the differences between those natures remain intact. As the Council’s Definition of the Faith stresses, Christian orthodoxy insists that equal emphasis be placed on both the Incarnate Son’s unity and His duality. And, while the emphasis on unity comes via the insistence that Jesus is exactly one person, the emphasis on duality comes via the emphatic affirmation that He possesses two wholly distinct—though united—natures. With respect to this latter emphasis, J. N. D. Kelly writes, “So, side by side with the unity, the Definition states that, as incarnate, the Word exists ‘in two natures’, each complete and each retaining its distinctive properties and operation unimpaired in the union.”6 Here two points deserve mention: First, while Jesus Christ is God the Son, He is God the Son Incarnate; second, as the Incarnate Son, He possesses two natures each of which retains its distinctive character. This last point features prominently in the discussion which follows.

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6Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, 341 (emphases added).
Now, according to Nelson Pike, “It could hardly escape notice that the doctrine of God’s timelessness does not square well with the standard Christian belief that God once assumed finite, human form (the doctrine of the incarnation).”\(^7\) That the doctrines of divine timelessness and the Incarnation are at odds seems to follow from the apparent fact that Jesus existed in time.\(^8\) In discussing the apparent tension between these two doctrines, Pike acknowledges that the doctrine of the Incarnation is regarded by Christian theologians in general as a paradox. In fact, he states, “The claim that God assumed finite and temporal form is not *supposed* to fit well with other things that Christians believe about the nature of God.”\(^9\) So, having raised the question of whether the two doctrines are compatible, Pike puts it aside, declining to discuss it further.

More recently, however, Thomas Senor has taken up the task of answering this question. In so doing, he concludes that a consequence of the doctrine of the Incarnation is that God the Son is *not* timeless. He presents two arguments in support of this conclusion, the first of which he calls [A]. [A] goes as follows.

1. Jesus Christ read in the synagogue (at the start of His ministry) before He carried His cross.
2. So, temporal predicates apply to Jesus Christ.
3. Jesus Christ = God the Son\(^10\)
4. So, temporal predicates apply to God the Son.
5. Temporal predicates don’t apply to timeless beings.
6. So, God the Son isn’t timeless.\(^11\)

\(^7\)Pike, *God and Timelessness*, 172.
\(^8\)Cf. Pike, ibid.: “As a man, of course, God had both temporal extension and temporal location.”
\(^9\)Ibid., 173.
\(^10\)Here, and in what follows, ‘=’ stands for ‘is identical to.’ So ‘Jesus Christ = God the Son’ should be read as ‘Jesus Christ is identical to God the Son.’
\(^11\)
While (1) follows from an apparently straightforward reading of the biblical narratives of Jesus’ life, (3) is intended simply to affirm the central claim of the doctrine of the Incarnation—namely, that Jesus Christ and God the Son are one and the same person. (5), Senor tells us, is a conceptual truth. (2) follows from (1), (4) from (2) and (3). (4) and (5) jointly entail (6). So, from an apparently straightforward reading of scripture, a claim central to Christian orthodoxy, and a conceptual truth, Senor argues that God the Son is not timeless. In so arguing, he presents Christian atemporalists with a significant challenge.

Fortunately for such atemporalists, however, a response to that challenge is not far to seek. For, apparently anticipating such concerns as those underlying [A], Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann appeal to Jesus’ dual nature to undergird their contention that God’s being timeless is consistent with the Son’s being incarnate. In a passage worth quoting in full, they state that

One of the explicitly intended consequences of the doctrine of the dual nature is that any statement predicating something of Christ is ambiguous unless it contains a phrase specifying one or the other or both of his two natures. That is, the proposition

\[(7) \text{ Christ died.}\]

is ambiguous among these three readings:

\[(7)(a) \text{ Christ with respect to his divine nature (or } qua \text{ God) died.}\]

\[(7)(b) \text{ Christ with respect to his human nature (or } qua \text{ man) died.}\]

\[(7)(c) \text{ Christ with respect to his divine and human natures (or } qua \text{ both God and man) died.}\]

From the standpoint of orthodox Christianity (7)(a) and (7)(c) are false, and (7)(b) is true. (7)(b) is not to be interpreted as denying that God died, however—such a denial forms the basis of at least one Christian heresy—but to deny that God, the second person of the Trinity,

\[11\text{ Thomas D. Senor, “Incarnation and Timelessness,” Faith and Philosophy 7 (1990), 150. My (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), and (6) are (P1), (C1), (P2), (C2), (P3), and (C3), respectively, of [A].}\]

\[12\text{ Ibid., 151. In a note, Senor acknowledges that, as it stands, (5) is less than perspicuous. So, for the sake of clarity and precision, he suggests that it be understood as the claim that “no positive, strictly temporal predicates apply to timeless beings” (ibid., 162).}\]
died with respect to his divine nature. Such an account is loaded with at least apparent paradox, and it is not part of our purpose here even to sketch an analysis of it; but, whatever its internal difficulties may be, the doctrine of the dual nature provides prima facie grounds for denying the incompatibility of God’s eternality and God’s becoming man.\(^\text{13}\)

Now, according to this line of thought, [A] needs to be reformulated to take account of Jesus’ dual nature. So reformulated (and rechristened [A’]), its first three premises go as follows.

1. Jesus Christ qua man read in the synagogue before Jesus Christ qua man carried His cross.
2. So temporal predicates apply to Jesus Christ qua man.
3. Jesus Christ qua God = God the Son\(^\text{14}\)

But, as Senor states, “nothing interesting follows” from (2’) and (3’).\(^\text{15}\) So, as he himself recognizes, such a defense of the prima facie compatibility of the two doctrines under consideration merits serious attention.

On Senor’s view, however, such a defense fails. To see this, he invites us to consider John, “an American citizen and father of an infant.”\(^\text{16}\) Few would find either

8. John qua American citizen has the duty to vote,

or

9. John qua father has the duty to change his child’s diaper,

difficult to understand. “Roughly,” Senor tells us, “these statements mean that in virtue of John’s having a certain property (being a citizen or being a father), he has a certain duty (to vote or to change a diaper).”\(^\text{17}\) While Senor thinks that (8) and (9) are true, he also thinks that both

\(^{13}\)Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, “Eternity,” in Thomas V. Morris, ed., The Concept of God (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 245-46. My (7), (7)(a), (7)(b), and (7)(c) are their (14), (14)(a), (14)(b), and (14)(c), respectively.

\(^{14}\)Senor, ibid., 152. My (1’), (2’), and (3’) are (P1), (C1), and (P2), respectively, of [A’].

\(^{15}\)Ibid.

\(^{16}\)Ibid.
(10) John qua citizen has the duty to change his child’s diaper, and

(11) John qua father has the duty to vote,

are false because it is not \textit{in virtue of} being a citizen that John is obligated to change his child’s diaper and it is not \textit{in virtue of} being a father that John is obligated to vote. “Nevertheless,” he claims, “it is important to see that ‘John qua citizen has the duty to vote,’ entails that ‘John (\textit{simpliciter}) has the duty to vote,’ since if it is true that John, in virtue of being a citizen, has the duty to vote, then it is true that John has the duty to vote.”\textsuperscript{18} Given such considerations, Senor asks, “Why should we think that sentences predicating things of Christ are any different?”\textsuperscript{19} In other words, if Jesus qua man is not timeless, why does it not follow that Jesus (\textit{simpliciter}) is not timeless?

Now, as far as I can see, Senor’s interpretation of statements of the form ‘S qua P has D’ simply is not plausible as an interpretation of the statements about Jesus relevant to the issue at hand. For, when one claims that

(1’) Jesus Christ qua man read in the synagogue before Jesus Christ qua man carried His cross,

one typically does not mean to be claiming that

(1’’) Jesus Christ \textit{in virtue of} being human read in the synagogue before Jesus Christ \textit{in virtue of} being human carried His cross.

So, even if Senor shows that ‘S qua P has D’ entails ‘S (\textit{simpliciter}) has D’ in cases where it ought to be read as ‘S has D \textit{in virtue of} possessing P,’ this turns out to be irrelevant. For, however one interprets statements of the form ‘Jesus qua man has D,’ it seems that one ought not

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., 152-53.
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 153.
interpret them—or, more precisely, those of them to which Senor appeals—as ‘Jesus has $D$ in virtue of being human.’

And, while this suffices to show the inadequacy of Senor’s rejoinder to Stump and Kretzmann, much remains to be said on the matter. For there seem to be cases of ‘$S$ qua $P$ has $D$’ which do not entail ‘$S$ (simpliciter) has $D$’ (or, at least, which do not entail ‘it is not the case that $S$ (simpliciter) has $\neg D$’). To see this, consider the Notre Dame football team which, despite playing quite well defensively, played quite poorly offensively in its last game. Letting $t$ be the period of time during which that game was played, it seems in such a case that both

(12) The Fightin’ Irish qua defensive team played well during $t$,

and

(13) The Fightin’ Irish qua offensive team did not play well during $t$.

are true. But what are we to infer from (12) and (13) concerning the Fightin’ Irish (simpliciter)? Well, from (12), one might be tempted to infer that

(14) The Fightin’ Irish (simpliciter) played well during $t$.

But, if one legitimately infers (14) from (12), why cannot one legitimately infer from (13) that

(15) The Fightin’ Irish (simpliciter) did not play well during $t$?

And, if (i) (12) and (13) are consistent, (ii) (14) follows from (12), and (iii) (15) follows from (13), then one cannot infer from (14) that

(16) It is not the case that the Fightin’ Irish (simpliciter) did not play well during $t$.

Of course, (12) and (13) certainly seem to be consistent. So it follows that either (14) and (15) do not follow from (12) and (13), respectively, or (14) does not entail that (15) is false (and vice

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$^{19}$Ibid.

$^{20}$Here $\neg D$ refers to the complement of $D$. 

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versa). So either some cases of ‘S qua P has D’ do not entail ‘S (simpliciter) has D’ or some cases of ‘S (simpliciter) has D’ do not entail ‘it is not the case that S (simpliciter) has ~D’ (where ~D is the complement of D). Thus, since Senor offers no reason for thinking that such cases do not include either ‘Jesus qua man has D’ or ‘Jesus (simpliciter) has D,’ his rejoinder to Stump and Kretzmann fails.

Of course, that his rejoinder to Stump and Kretzmann fails does not mean that the move they make in response to the concerns which underlie [A]—which move Senor calls the ‘qua-move’—succeeds. No doubt their defense would be bolstered by a positive account of how a timeless God could be incarnate. In section II, I offer a suggestion intended to help make sense of the Incarnation of a timeless God. Before doing so, however, I first argue that, even if the qua-move fails, there remain compelling reasons to think [A] unsuccessful, and then respond to Senor’s second argument against the consistency of the doctrines of divine timelessness and the Incarnation.

With respect to [A], it is important to notice that, whatever problems the Incarnation poses for atemporalists, it poses them for temporalists as well. For, as Brian Leftow suggests,

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21 Since I take it as obvious that there are no non-arbitrary grounds for claiming that, while (12) entails (14), (13) fails to entail (15) (or vice versa), I regard as untenable a response which involves such a claim.

22 I have not shown—and have not attempted to show—that cases of ‘S qua P has D’ (or ‘S (simpliciter) has D’) in which ‘Jesus’ replaces ‘S’ resemble those in which ‘the Fightin’ Irish’ replaces it. Does this undermine my claim to have shown that Senor’s rejoinder to Stump and Kretzmann fails? (I am indebted to Gregory Ganssle for raising this question.) Well, in making that rejoinder, Senor argues that ‘Jesus qua man has D’ entails ‘Jesus (simpliciter) has D.’ His argument amounts to pointing out that some cases of ‘S qua P has D’ entail ‘S (simpliciter) has D.’ (As seen above, the case on which this argument relies is ‘John qua citizen has a duty to vote.’) Now it seems that either (12) and (13) are cases of ‘S qua P has D’ which do not entail ‘S (simpliciter) has D’ or (14) and (15) are cases of ‘S (simpliciter) has D’ which do not entail ‘it is not the case that S (simpliciter) has ~D.’ So, even if some cases of ‘S qua P has D’ entail ‘S (simpliciter) has D’ and some cases of ‘S (simpliciter) has D’ entail ‘it is not the case that S (simpliciter) has ~D,’ not all such cases have such entailments. In order for Senor’s rejoinder to succeed, then, he must show not only that some cases of ‘S qua P has D’ entail ‘S (simpliciter) has D’ but also that such cases include those in which ‘Jesus’ replaces ‘S’ and that ‘Jesus (simpliciter) has D’ entails ‘it is not the case that Jesus (simpliciter) has ~D.’ But, as far as I can see, he fails to show either of these things. Hence, I conclude that his rejoinder to Stump and Kretzmann fails.
reconciling God’s timelessness with the Incarnation is no more difficult than reconciling God’s omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, or spacelessness with the Incarnation. So, for instance, one can envisage an argument for the incompatibility of the doctrines of divine omnipresence and the Incarnation which parallels [A]. Such an argument—which, for the sake of convenience, I shall refer to as [A*]—might go as follows.

(17) For some place \( p \), Jesus Christ went to \( p \).

(18) So, for some place \( p \) and time \( t \), ‘Jesus is at \( p \)’ is not true at \( t \).

(19) Jesus Christ = God the Son

(20) So, for some place \( p \) and time \( t \), ‘God the Son is at \( p \)’ is not true at \( t \).

(21) For every person \( S \), time \( t \), and place \( p \), if ‘\( S \) is omnipresent’ is true at \( t \), then ‘\( S \) is at \( p \)’ is true at \( t \).

(22) So, for some time \( t \), ‘God the Son is omnipresent’ is not true at \( t \).

In support of (17), one could appeal to any of a number of biblical texts describing Christ’s travels. If \( t \) refers to a time just prior to Jesus’ going to a place \( p \), then from the assumption that one cannot go to a place where one already is it follows that Jesus is not at \( p \) at \( t \). (18) follows from this apparent fact. (19) is (3) of [A]. If [A]’s (4) follows from its (2) and (3), then by parity of reasoning (20) surely follows from (18) and (19). I take (21) simply to be a conceptual truth, comparable to [A]’s (5).

To avoid the force of [A*], one might invoke the doctrine of divine spacelessness and argue that, strictly speaking, (21) is false because omnipresent beings are spaceless. But, of course, such a move will not work. For, as Senor himself acknowledges, one can formulate a similar

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24For a particular text, I suggest, say, John 4:3: “he left Judea and started back to Galilee” (NRSV).
argument for the incompatibility of the doctrines of divine spacelessness and the Incarnation. Here he offers the following, which he calls [A’’], as an example of such an argument.

(23) Jesus Christ is in Nazareth and not in Jerusalem.
(24) So, local predicates apply to Jesus Christ.
(25) Jesus Christ = God the Son
(26) So, local predicates apply to God the Son.
(27) Local predicates don’t apply to spaceless beings.
(28) So, God the Son isn’t spaceless.25

In responding to [A’’], Senor concedes that in becoming incarnate the Son ceased to be spaceless. Moreover, he does so precisely because he thinks it inconsistent to maintain both that [A] succeeds and that [A’’] fails. And, while I do not know how he would respond to [A*], it is difficult to see how one who accepts (21) could conclude that [A’’] succeeds but [A*] fails. For this reason, it seems likely that Senor would respond to [A*] by conceding that in becoming incarnate the Son ceased to be omnipresent.

Now he seems to me to be correct about the connection between [A] and [A’’]. It is difficult to see how one consistently could hold that the former but not the latter is persuasive. So also I find it difficult to see how one consistently could hold that [A] succeeds but [A*] fails. And, while Senor is correct about the connection between [A] and arguments such as [A’’], his response to such arguments seems ill-considered. To see this, consider the remarks of Athanasius of Alexandria, who writes,

For [the Savior] was not, as might be imagined, circumscribed in the body, nor, while present in the body, was he absent elsewhere; nor, while he moved the body, was the

25Senor, ibid., 155. My (23), (24), (25), (26), (27), and (28) are (P1), (C1), (P2), (C2), (P3), and (C3), respectively, of [A’’].
universe left void of his working and providence; but, thing most marvelous, Word as he was, so far from being contained by anything, he rather contained all things himself; and just as while present in the whole of creation, he is at once distinct in being from the universe, and present in all things by his own power—giving order to all things, and over all and in all revealing his own providence, and giving life to each thing and all things, including the whole without being included, but being in his own Father alone wholly and in every respect—thus, even while present in a human body and himself quickening it, he was, without inconsistency, quickening the universe as well, and was in every process of nature, and was outside the whole, and while known from the body by his works, he was none the less manifest from the working of the universe as well.\textsuperscript{26}

So, on Athanasius’ view, in becoming incarnate, the Son did not cease to be omnipresent. And, as indicated above in the discussion of the Council of Chalcedon, Athanasius is not alone in this regard. Indeed, at least since that council, Christian orthodoxy has maintained not only that Jesus Christ possesses two natures but also that each of those natures retains its distinctive properties. Thus, on the apparently uncontroversial assumption that omnipresence is constitutive of deity, the claim that, in becoming incarnate, the Son ceases to be omnipresent departs from Christian orthodoxy. So, even if the claim that the Incarnate Son is not spaceless can be countenanced, the claim that He is not omnipresent cannot be. Or, at least, not by those who wish to remain within the parameters of Christian orthodoxy established at Chalcedon.\textsuperscript{27}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[26]Athanasius, “On the Incarnation of the Word,” trans. Archibald Robertson, in Christology of the Later Fathers, ed. Edward R. Hardy (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1954), 70-71. Immediately following the passage quoted above, Athanasius contrasts the Incarnate Son with other men, who are bound to their bodies: “Now, the Word of God in his man’s nature was not like that; for he was not bound to his body, but was rather himself wielding it, so that he was not only in it, but was actually in everything, and while external to the universe, abode in his Father only. And this was the wonderful thing that he was at once walking as man, and as the Word was quickening all things, and as the Son was dwelling with his Father.”
\item[27]But why wish to remain within those parameters? If Christian orthodoxy insists that the Incarnate Son is omnipresent, why not simply reject such orthodoxy? Since such questions deserve more attention than I can give them here, I shall content myself with noting that there do seem to me to be compelling reasons for wishing to remain within the parameters of Christian orthodoxy. Still, regardless of whether one agrees with me on this, Senor cannot save [A] by abandoning such orthodoxy. For not only does his defense of (3)—which, of course, plays a crucial role in [A]—amount simply to pointing out that one who denied it “would no longer be orthodox” (Senor, ibid., 151), but he takes the upshot of [A] to be that one cannot be both an atemporalist and an orthodox Christian: “I therefore conclude that if one is committed to an orthodox Christology, one shall have to reject . . . the doctrine of timelessness” (ibid., 161). Obviously, one who defends [A] by rejecting Christian orthodoxy cannot legitimately conclude that [A] shows the doctrine of divine timelessness to be inconsistent with such orthodoxy.
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\end{footnotesize}
Moreover, one can envisage arguments similar to \([A^*]\) being mustered for the incompatibility of the doctrine of the Incarnation with, say, the doctrines of divine omnipotence and divine omniscience. Thus, the problems which arise from the doctrine of the Incarnation for atemporalists arise also for temporalists. Or, at least, so it seems. In this case, however, atemporalists have no more reason to respond to \([A]\) by abandoning God’s timelessness than temporalists have to respond to arguments such as \([A^*]\) and \([A’’]\) by abandoning God’s omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, or spacelessness. And, in light of the central role played by omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence and spacelessness within the theistic tradition, it seems more reasonable for Christian theists to conclude that arguments such as \([A^*]\) and \([A’’]\) fail than to abandon those divine attributes. But, if Christian temporalists can reasonably affirm God’s omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence and spacelessness despite such arguments, I see no reason for thinking that Christian atemporalists cannot reasonably affirm the doctrine of divine timelessness despite arguments such as \([A]\). So, rather than concluding with Senor that \([A]\) succeeds, I think that atemporalists ought simply to hold their ground and insist that it fails.

At the risk of overkill, I want to conclude this discussion of \([A]\)—or, perhaps, of Senor’s defense of \([A]\)—simply by considering the following arguments. Following his interpretation of ‘\(S\ qua P\ has D,\’\) one can conclude from

(29) Jesus Christ qua man exists contingently,

that

(30) Jesus Christ (\textit{simpliciter}) exists contingently.

And, given (30), one can construct an argument similar to \([A]\) as follows.

(30) Jesus Christ (\textit{simpliciter}) exists contingently.
(31) Jesus Christ = God the Son

(32) So, God the Son exists contingently.

(33) So, God the Son does not exist necessarily.

Now, given the parameters placed on Christian orthodoxy at Chalcedon, (33) is clearly unacceptable. In fact, even if one disregards those parameters, (33) is not acceptable. For, if (33) is true, the Son turns out—whatever else one says about the Incarnation—not to be divine. This follows from the fact that, if God the Son exists contingently, it is necessarily true that, if He exists, He exists contingently. So, even if the Son had never become incarnate, it would follow from Senor’s defense of [A] that the Son does not exist necessarily (and, hence, is not divine). Or, at least, so it follows if (29) is true. And, given the traditional Christian belief that the Son could have refrained from becoming incarnate, it seems hard to quibble with (29). For this reason, all theists—or, at least, all Christian theists—ought to insist that [A] fails.

From biblical affirmations that the Son ‘became flesh’ and ‘took on’ the form of a servant, Senor develops a second argument for the incompatibility of the doctrines of divine timelessness and the Incarnation. This argument, which he calls [B], goes as follows.

(34) God the Son eternally (and essentially) has His Divine nature.

(35) The human (accidental) nature of God the Son is assumed (or ‘taken on’).

(36) X’s assuming (or ‘taking on’) a nature involves a change in X’s intrinsic properties.

(37) So, the assumption of the human nature brings about a change in the intrinsic (though non-essential) properties of God the Son.

(38) So, the Son is mutable.

(39) Mutability entails temporal duration.

(40) So the Son is not timeless.29

The Son’s assuming a human nature requires His being temporal because assuming a nature requires changing and changing requires being temporal. Or, at least, so says [B]. Here the critical premise is (36). For, of course, changing \textit{does} require being temporal. So, if the Son’s assuming a human nature requires Him to change, He is not timeless. Thus, if assuming a nature requires changing, it follows that the Son is not timeless.

But \textit{does} assuming a nature require changing? Here Senor writes,

\begin{quote}
Is there any such reading of what it is to ‘take on’ or ‘assume’ a nature (or anything else, for that matter) that is compatible with immutability? Typically, when one ‘takes on’ something (such as a new attitude or job), one brings it about that one has something which one previously lacked. That is to say, in run-of-the-mill cases, if a person ‘takes on’ X, she changes in at least one of her intrinsic properties. The question presently before us is whether one’s taking on X entails that in virtue of assuming X, one has changed. It certainly sounds to my ear as if the entailment holds. I can’t see how, if the Second Person of the Trinity is perfectly immutable (and atemporal), He could ‘take on’ anything. What He has, He has; what He has not, He has not.\textsuperscript{30}
\end{quote}

That the Son has whatever properties He has and lacks whatever properties He lacks is certainly beyond dispute. Even so, as far as I can see, this does not preclude the Son from having a nature accidental to Himself. Of course, if by ‘S assumes a nature X’ one just \textit{means} ‘S at one time lacks X and then at a later time possesses X,’ no timeless being could assume a nature. I should think, however, that the traditional language about the Son’s assuming a nature is intended not to make a claim about what is true at two different times \(t\) and \(t^*\) (namely, that at \(t\) the Son lacked a human nature but at \(t^*\) the Son possessed such a nature). Rather, such language is intended to emphasize the fact that, while the Son possesses a human nature, such a nature is accidental to

\textsuperscript{29}Senor, ibid., 157. My (34), (35), (36), (37), (38), (39), and (40) are (P1), (P2), (P3), (C1), (C2), (P4), and (C3), respectively, of [B].

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., 158-59.
Him (and, perhaps, that He has it voluntarily). So, in the sense of ‘assume’ relevant to the Incarnation, it seems that assuming a nature does not require changing. For it to be true that the Son assumes a nature, it is enough that He possess a nature accidental to Himself. And, moreover, there seems to be no reason for thinking that a timeless being could not possess a nature accidental to itself. So, *pace* Senor, that the Son assumes a human nature does not entail that the Son changes. Thus, like [A], [B] fails.

II. Timelessness and the Two-Minds Christology

As mentioned above, the responses to [A] and [B] given there certainly would be strengthened by a positive account of how a timeless God could be incarnate. In what remains of this paper, I hope to suggest that atemporalists have available to them just such an account. As the title of this section implies, I have in mind here an account of the Incarnation known as the two-minds view. On that account, the Incarnation involves “a duality of consciousness or mentality . . . introduced into the divine life of God the Son.” In fleshing this out, Thomas Morris—perhaps the most eloquent of the two-minds view’s recent advocates—states that in the case of God Incarnate we must recognize something like two distinct minds or systems of mentality. There is first what we can call the eternal mind of God the Son, with its distinctively divine consciousness, whatever that might be like, encompassing the full scope of omniscience, empowered by the resources of omnipotence, and present in power and knowledge throughout the entirety of creation. And in addition to this divine mind, there is

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31 Perhaps one’s assuming a nature entails not only one’s possessing a nature accidental to oneself but also one’s possessing such a nature voluntarily. Since, so far as I can see, such a complication has no bearing on the issue at hand, I shall not pursue the matter.

32 Cf. Stump and Kretzmann, ibid., 246: “The divine nature of the second person of the Trinity, like the divine nature of either of the other persons of the Trinity, cannot become temporal; nor could the second person at some time acquire a human nature he does not eternally have. Instead, the second person eternally has two natures. . . .”

the distinctly earthly mind with its consciousness that came into existence and developed with the human birth and growth of Christ’s earthly form of existence.\textsuperscript{34}

In becoming incarnate, then, God the Son assumed not only a human body but also a human mind. Moreover, the Incarnate Son’s divine and human minds stand in what Morris describes as “an asymmetrical accessing relation” to one another so that, while the former enjoys complete access to the latter, the latter does not enjoy such access to the former.\textsuperscript{35} Or, at least, so says the two-minds view.

So, while the Incarnate Son’s divine mind is omniscient, it does not follow that His human mind—lacking, as it does, complete access to the contents of His divine mind—is also omniscient. And, insofar as it allows one to maintain that the Incarnate Son’s divine mind is omniscient but His human mind is not, the two-minds view seems to me to allow one to make good sense of such pairs of claims as ‘Jesus qua man lacks knowledge’ and ‘Jesus qua God lacks no knowledge.’ Moreover, on such a view, it appears to make perfectly good sense to say both that Jesus qua man lacks knowledge and that Jesus (\textit{simpliciter}) lacks no knowledge. But, as things go here for omniscience, so they go for other divine attributes such as omnipotence, omnipresence, and spacelessness. What is more, insofar as its advocates can maintain plausibly that the Incarnate Son’s human mind has genuine limitations, such a view also has the obvious advantage of allowing them to treat the biblical narratives of Jesus’ life straightforwardly. When such Incarnational narratives seem to indicate that He either developed intellectually or experienced real limitations, advocates of the two-minds view can take such passages at face

\textsuperscript{34}Morris, “The Metaphysics of God Incarnate,” 121.

\textsuperscript{35}Cf. Morris, ibid., 121-22: “the human mind [of Christ] was contained by but did not itself contain the divine mind, or, to portray it from the other side, the divine mind contained, but was not contained by, the human mind.” While Morris takes the claim that the Incarnate Son’s divine and humans minds stand in an asymmetrical accessing relation to one another to be a necessary feature of the two-minds account of the Incarnation, he explicitly denies that such a claim suffices for such an account. Cf. ibid., 125-27.
value and maintain that Jesus in fact did develop intellectually or experience limitations. And, as Morris indicates, this alone gives us significant reason to take such a view seriously.

Here one might object that, since the kenotic view also allows its advocates to take the Incarnational narratives straightforwardly, the fact that the two-minds view allows this does not warrant preferring it over the kenotic view. Of course, even if this were true, it nonetheless might be that other reasons exist for preferring the two-minds view over the kenotic view. But it certainly is not obvious that, with respect to taking the Incarnational narratives seriously, the two views are on equal footing. For, by stipulating that in becoming incarnate God the Son gives up, say, omniscience, the kenotic view appears to violate the parameters of orthodoxy set at Chalcedon. And, while advocates of such a view might be able to avoid this unwelcome consequence by stipulating that, rather than being omniscient, the divine nature includes some such property as being omniscient unless giving it up, such a maneuver seems unsatisfying at best and ad hoc at worst. Still, since my purpose in this section is to suggest both that the two-minds view merits serious consideration and that, with the help of such a view, Christian atemporalists can account for the Incarnation of a timeless God, I shall put aside questions about the adequacy of the kenotic view.

Whatever the virtues (or vices) of the kenotic view, the two-minds view fits well with two other claims to which the Christian tradition seems to commit its adherents. First, according to the Definition of the Faith affirmed at Chalcedon, Jesus possesses a ‘rational soul.’ I take this

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36By ‘kenotic view,’ I mean the view of the Incarnation according to which, in becoming incarnate, God the Son gave up (or “emptied Himself” of) certain divine attributes. For an interesting defense of the kenotic view which responds to Morris, see Ronald J. Feenstra, “Reconsidering Kenotic Christology,” in Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., eds., Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 128-52.

37See Norris, The Christological Controversy, 159.
affirmation to commit the Council to the view that Jesus possesses a human soul. Indeed, since the Definition clearly affirms that He is fully human, it follows from it and the assumption that being fully human involves possessing a distinctively human soul that Jesus possesses such a soul. Second, according to the Council of Constantinople, Jesus possesses two wills—one divine, one human.\(^{38}\) That Jesus possesses both a human soul and a human will implies that He possesses in addition to a divine mind a distinctively human mind. Of course, it is hard to resist the temptation to infer from this that Christian orthodoxy demands the two-minds view. Hard, but not impossible. For one might maintain that a human mind is simply a mind which attains at least a certain minimum level of excellence and happens to be embodied in a human body. In such a case, one could maintain that, once it becomes embodied in a human body, the divine mind of the Son becomes a human mind. Thus, one could maintain that, while Jesus has both a divine and a human mind, those minds are not numerically distinct. Such a position might suggest itself to those Christians who think that minds individuate persons and thus that, if Jesus is one person with two natures, He must have one mind with two natures. Still, since I believe neither that minds individuate persons nor that this sort of position is as much in keeping with the spirit of Chalcedon as is the two-minds view, I find it less plausible than that view. So, given that the two-minds view of the Incarnation seems to me to comport extraordinarily well with Christian orthodoxy, I conclude that it deserves serious consideration.

And, in addition to those advantages in virtue of which it deserves such consideration, the two-minds view also seems to provide its advocates with at least a rudimentary account of how a timeless being could be incarnate. For, given such a view, one could claim that Jesus’ divine

\(^{38}\)For background on the controversy which led to the Council of Constantinople, see Lampe, “Christian Theology in the Patristic Period,” 141-46.
mind is timeless but that His human mind is temporal. Such a claim puts flesh on the bones of the claim of Stump, Kretzmann, and other atemporalists that, while Jesus qua man is temporal, Jesus qua God is timeless. So, just as one can employ the two-minds view to defend the claim that the Son’s being incarnate need not preclude His being omniscient (or omnipotent, or omnipresent), one also can employ it to defend the claim that His being incarnate need not preclude His being timeless. Thus, at least on the face of it, the two-minds view provides atemporalists with resources sufficient for responding plausibly to the objection to divine timelessness which arises from the Incarnation.39

39For helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper, I am indebted to D. Jeffrey Bingham, Thomas P. Flint, Gregory Ganssle, James Leo Garrett, George Klein, and Glenn Kreider.
Douglas K. Blount, “On the Incarnation of a Timeless God,” in Gregory E. Ganssle and David M. Woodruff, eds., God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature (Oxford University Press, 2001). John M. Frame, The Doctrine of God (P&R Publishing, 2002), chapter 24. Paul Helm, Eternal God: A Study of God without Time (Oxford University Press, 2nd edition, 2011). James Anderson, Paradox in Christian Theology (Wipf & Stock, 2007). God’s timelessness without creation is precisely due to the fact that time came into existence with creation. 2. Methodology. Many philosophers of religion think that the Scriptures do not teach definitively any one view concerning God and time (Craig 2001a, 2001b; for a differing view, see Padgett, 1992). The challenge for a defender of a timeless conception of God is to explain how such a God is related to temporal events. For example, God is directly conscious of each moment of time. The relation of his timeless cognition and the temporal objects of his cognition cannot be captured by using strictly temporal relations such as simultaneity because temporal simultaneity is a transitive relation. The incarnation is an event in history, but it is also a timeless truth about our giving birth to God in our inmost being, as Meister Eckhart wrote. Jesus put it this way when he promised his followers that they could know themselves as both individuals and, inwardly, as kin of God: “On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me and I am in you” (John 14.20). Dr Mark Vernon is a psychotherapist at the Maudsley Hospital, south London, and in private practice, and the author of The Idler Guide to Ancient Philosophy, among other books. The Myth of God Incarnate is a book edited by John Hick and published by SCM Press in 1977. James Dunn, in a 1980 literature review of academic work on the incarnation, noted the “...well-publicized symposium entitled The Myth of God Incarnate, including contributions on the NT from M. Goulder and F. Young, which provoked several responses.” Two years later, in another literature review, R. T. France commented that “theology dropped out of the headlines again, until in 1977 the title, if not the