Christ – a contradiction:
a defense of contradictory Christology

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> *The doctrine of the Incarnation has long perplexed believers and non-believers alike. What is perplexing is the paradoxical appearance of an Incarnate God, who is supposed to be omnipotent. Christ is supposed to be God, and yet also is supposed to have a finite corporeal body, feel pain, and have other properties of creatures, whereas God is supposed to be none of these things. - Allan Bäck [6].*

> *[T]here is a point at which the student of Christology becomes a student of Logic; ...a point at which [the student] has to make use of the concept of incompatibility and entailment; a point at which [the student] has to answer a charge of self-contradiction. - C. J. F. Williams [34]*

This paper aims to do two things. First, the paper aims to illuminate the role that logic itself plays in theology (and any other discipline), and also to review a particular account of logic itself. Given the breadth of these topics my discussion aims only to convey a basic sketch of logic and its role, leaving a fuller discussion for elsewhere. The second aim of the paper is to defend the view that the true Christology is logically contradictory, that the right response to the fundamental problem of Christology (viz., Christ's having apparently complementary – contradiction-entailing – natures) is to accept the familiar contradictions.

1 The fundamental problem of Christology

The fundamental problem of Christology is the apparent contradiction of Christ's having two apparently complementary – contradiction-entailing – natures, the divine and the human [17]. This problem may be sharpest for Conciliar Christology, as in Timothy Pawl's work [22, 24]; however, the prima facie problem is clear for any orthodox or traditional Christianity according to which Christ has two apparently complementary natures.

Here is one way to see the fundamental problem:

1. Christ cannot suffer (in virtue of Christ's divine nature).

2. Christ can suffer (in virtue of Christ's human nature).

3. Therefore, Christ both can and cannot suffer.

This argument relies on the familiar 'transference principle' (in effect, a generalized 'communicatio idiomatum' doctrine) that

P0. Something that has (or exemplifies) a nature N has whatever properties are entailed by having nature N.

The argument also assumes the orthodox view (from conciliar texts) that

P1. Christ has a divine nature and *independently and without diminishment* also has a human nature.[1]

The history of Christian theology, and in particular that of Christology, is peppered with sophisticated ways to modify (P0) or (P1) in response to the apparent contradiction of Christ [1, 13, 14, 16, 17]. (P0) is a default metaphysical (i.e., extra-theological) principle about the relation between natures and entities that have them. Overturning (P0) requires good reason, and theologians have pointed to the fundamental problem (above) – the glaring contradiction in (3) – as a good reason to overturn the principle. Similarly,

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[1]I believe that 'independently and without diminishment' is redundant but I use it to emphasize the orthodox view in juxtaposition with the many other views whereby some hybrid or conflated nature, or something other than the having of two target natures, is involved. (The words are ultimately redundant because having a nature N is *having that nature*. And while having two natures, N1 and N2, is strikingly rare it is nonetheless a case of having N1 and also having N2 – having (exemplifying) each of them.)

the distinctly theological principle (P1) has been rejected or modified or non-standardly interpreted in ways that aim to avoid the fundamental problem – to avoid the apparent contradiction of Christ. Against these traditions that are fueled by a rejection of (3) I shall assume both the (orthodox) principle (P1) together with the flat-footed metaphysical principle (P0). In what follows (P1) and (P0) are held fixed.

Rejecting all logical contradictions (i.e., sentences of the form *it is true that p and it is false that p*), and a fortiori any contradiction in our theology, requires a rejection of (1) or (2) or the step to (3). But there is another way, namely, to accept (3): that it's true that Christ can suffer and it's false that Christ can suffer. What immediately removes this option from the theological table is the view that *logic itself* rules out the possibility of such true but logically contradictory claims.

I am not in position to argue that the true Christology is logically contradictory. But that such a view is both viable and motivated is what I aim to defend. Once the view is allowed a place at the table debate can move forward on whether it is the most natural and indeed true Christology.

The barriers in the way of accepting a logically contradictory Christology are built on an incorrect view of logic itself. Accordingly, a large amount of space in this paper is spent on logic itself. I begin in §2 with a sketch of the role of logic in our theories – and in theology in particular. After specifying the role of logic I give an account of logic itself, an account of which entailment relation is logical entailment (see §3). The given account of logic differs from the standard (so-called classical-logic) account; but the given account is both well-known and well-motivated in the philosophy of logic. My aim in this paper is not to rehearse the wide-ranging debates that motivate the advanced account of logic; my aim is to put the account on the theological table as a viable account, leaving fuller debate to cited sources. After putting the role and specific account of logic on the table I turn to a defense of a contradictory Christology, first advancing the basic position (see §4) and then defending it against various objections (see §5). The paper closes in §6 with remarks towards future (analytic) theology.

2   The role of logic in general and in theology

Logic is the common foundation of all (so-called closed) theories; it's part of the (extra-logical, stronger) 'consequence' or 'entailment' relation for our

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true theories. These ideas can be spelled out with reference to logic's role in theology.

2.1 Theology and consequence

Christian theology is a theory of God, just as macro physics is a theory of the macro-physical world and just as mathematical theories are theories of their respective mathematical phenomena (numbers, categories, sets, whathaveyou). When we construct our theology (our theory of God) we begin by adding truths of God, including (for example) that God is triune, that Christ has two (complementary) natures, that God is omniscient, and so on for whatever we, as theologians (as theorists of God), take to be true of God – including, of course, truths about what God is not, what is false of God (e.g., that it is false that God is limited, false that God is evil, etc.).[2]

When theorists aim to construct a true theory, they aim to construct as complete a theory as possible. In particular, the resulting theory should not only contain the initial thrown-in truths (e.g., that God is triune, that Christ has two natures, etc.); the theory should also contain *whatever follows from the truths in the theory*; it should contain all of the *consequences* of the theory's claims. The question is: what is meant by 'follows from' and 'consequences' in this context?

This is where consequence relations enter. A consequence relation for a set of claims is an entailment relation.[3] In particular, a consequence relation tells you *what claims follow*, according to that relation, from your given set of claims, where 'follows from' is understood as entailment – as necessary truth preservation over some target space of possibilities.

Example: consider the theory of knowledge. That theory contains the following truth:

4. It is known that 1+1=2.

And there are many other thrown-in truths of that form: *it is known that p*

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[2]The *source* of our knowledge of theological truth is an issue for epistemology; my topic in this paper concerns only the record – the theory – of our true theology, not its source.

[3]In more detail: I assume that target consequence relations are what are classified as 'closure relations' along the lines initially explored by Tarski [33]. This imposes certain technical constraints on what counts as a consequence relation; but for my purposes I leave the details aside. (Everything I say is compatible with the requisite conditions on closure relations.)

where p is some known truth. But there are many 'it is known that...'-free claims in our true theory of knowledge too. An example:

5. 1+1=2.

Why is (5) in our true – and as-complete-as-possible – theory of knowledge? Answer: because (5) is a *consequence* of (4), and (4) is in our theory of knowledge. Our best theory of knowledge has a consequence relation according to which, for any sentence p in the language, p follows from – is entailed by, is a consequence of – the claim *it is known that p*.

There is nothing special about the theory of knowledge. The construction of true theories involves the construction of consequence (closure) relations for those theories – an entailment relation that serves to 'complete' the theory (as far as possible) by churning out all of the truths that follow (that are entailed by) the claims in the theory. Our true theory of (for example) temporal phenomena has it that *it is false that p* follows from *it is always true that it is false that p*; our true theory of (for example) metaphysical possibility has it that *it is metaphysically possible that p* follows from *it is true that p*.

Such theory-specific consequence relations are just that: theory-specific. The consequence relation governing knowledge claims (i.e., claims of the form *it is known that...*) are not involved in the consequence relation governing the theory of arithmetic (unless the theory is also in part about explicit knowledge of arithmetic). The theorist's task is to construct a set of truths about a target phenomenon and close that set of truths under the consequence relation that, by the theorist's lights, is the right relation to 'complete' the true theory of the given phenomenon.

And theology is no different. Theologians must not only add various basic truths about God but also 'complete' (as far as possible) the theory via a consequence relation. According to the consequence relation of true Christian theology, *that it is false that p* follows from any sentence p that claims the existence of a rival god or, for that matter, any sentence p that limits God's powers or authority. While theologians have not always been explicit about their target consequence relation they have nonetheless assumed one in their systematic pursuit of the 'complete' (as possible) truth of God – the true theology.

Without a consequence (closure) relation our theories remain inadequate; they fail to contain truths that are entailed by the given set of truths. Inasmuch as theorists, and theologians in particular, aim to give as complete a

theory of the target phenomenon as possible, the reliance on a consequence relation for our theory is required.

But what have such theory-specific consequence relations to do with logic's role in theories?

2.2   Consequence and (formal) logical consequence

Logic is a very special consequence (entailment, closure) relation. Logic is the common core of all (closed) theories; it is at the bottom of all of the (extra-logical, theory-specific) consequence relations of our true theories. While the theory-specific consequence relation for our theory of knowledge is different from the consequence relation for our theory of arithmetic (or necessity, or God) the two consequence relations share a common elementary core: namely, logic. Logic itself does not say anything peculiar about knowledge claims, arithmetical claims, modal claims or theological claims; logic ignores the specific subject matter of those sort of claims (be it knowledge, arithmetic, modality or God) and treats them as it treats claims about any subject matter whatsoever. In this way, logic is said to be 'universal' and 'topic-neutral'.

Logic's universality and foundational role in all of our true (closed) theories is achieved by logic's narrow focus: it focuses only on so-called logical vocabulary. Chief examples of logical vocabulary (and, for purposes of this paper, the only canvassed examples) are the so-called boolean quartet:[4]

- Truth (or null) operator: *it is true that...*

- Falsity (or negation) operator: *it is false that...*

- Conjunction: *...and...*[5]

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[4]This is an incomplete list of logical vocabulary. The logical vocabulary extends beyond the list below to the standard first-order vocabulary involving logical quantifiers (though not, on my view, an identity predicate). Again, for present purposes it suffices to focus on the following basic vocabulary.

[5]This is better framed by explicitly using the logical truth operator:

  ∘ It is true that...and it is true that...

While the primitive operator does not need to be decorated with the truth operator, it is helpful to remember the logical equivalence between the two presentations. (This is merely heuristic to avoid reading the logical 'and' as involving tense as in 'Max woke up and Max got out of bed' or the like.)

- Disjunction: *either...or...(or both)*

Logical consequence – logical entailment – is a so-called formal relation: it looks only at certain 'forms' of sentences, namely, the ones individuated in terms of the logical vocabulary. In particular, logic recognizes only a limited list of sentence forms:

- Atomic sentences: any sentence which is *free* of logical vocabulary.

- 'Nullations' (truth claims): any sentence of the form *it is true that....*[6]

- Negations (falsity claims): any sentence of the form *it is false that....*

- Conjunctions: any sentence of the given (logical-conjunction) form, namely, *...and...* where 'and' is logical conjunction.

- Disjunctions: any sentence of the given (logical-disjunction) form, namely, *...or...* where 'or' is logical disjunction.

Logic recognizes only the foregoing kinds (forms) of sentences, and it classifies entailments only in terms of the limited list of forms. Important to note is that logic treats all atomic claims on par: there's nothing, according to logic, that differentiates the atomic 'God is good' from 'Hogwarts is fictional' in terms of their respective (logical) consequences. Whatever follows according to logic from one follows according to logic from the other; and whatever the one logically entails the other logically entails. Logic itself sees no difference *in logically relevant content* between the two claims; such a difference – and the resulting difference in entailments – arises only in extra-logical, theory-specific consequence relations.

Examples of common logical entailments are the following, where $\wedge$ is logical conjunction, $\vee$ logical disjunction, $\neg$ the falsity (or negation) operator, $\dagger$ the truth (or null) operator, and p and q are any (declarative) sentences:[7]

- p logically entails $p \vee q$.

- $p \wedge q$ logically entails q (and also p).

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[6]This category is often ignored, since logic treats its truth operator as (logically) redundant. In much of what follows I follow suit by ignoring, for the most part, the truth operator.

[7]Throughout, 'sentence' shall be used to pick out *declarative* sentences – sentences that declare something about reality.

- $\neg p \wedge \neg q$ is a logical consequence of $\neg(p \vee q)$ (and vice versa).

- $\neg p \vee \neg q$ is a logical consequence of $\neg(p \wedge q)$ (and vice versa).

- p logically entails $\dagger p$ (and vice versa).

- $\neg\neg p$ logically entails $\dagger p$ (and vice versa).

Logic is formal in that its consequence relation holds only in virtue of the given logical forms. For example, anything of the form $\neg p \wedge \neg q$ logically entails anything of the form $\neg(p \vee q)$. And logic says nothing about any 'forms' that go beyond its recognized list.

Logical entailment, like any entailment relation, is a relation of necessary truth preservation over relevant possibilities – in this case, the so-called logical possibilities (i.e., the possibilities recognized by logic). The recipe for logical entailment is absence of counterexample:

L. Let X be a set of sentences, and p any sentence. Then X logically entails p (i.e., p is a logical consequence of X) if and only if there is no possibility in which everything in X is true but p is untrue. (A counterexample is a possibility in which everything in X is true but p untrue.)

Here, 'possibility' picks out whatever logic recognizes as possible. While there is ongoing debate about which possibilities are logical possibilities (i.e., recognized by logic's entailment relation) one matter is settled: logic plays its universal, foundational role in our theories by recognizing the widest space of possibilities. In physical theory, the space of possibilities is restricted to those (logical) possibilities that obey physical laws. In arithmetic the space of possibilities is restricted to those (logical) possibilities that obey the laws of arithmetic. In theology the space of possibilities is restricted to those (logical) possibilities that obey the truths about God.

Logic is the common core of all theory-specific consequence relations in virtue of logic's recognizing the widest space of possibilities. The possibilities in terms of which a theory-specific entailment relation is defined (i.e., in terms of which the theory's class of would-be counterexamples is defined) are one and all logical possibilities. The theory-specific consequence relations restrict the space of logical possibilities in order to focus on target, phenomenon-specific entailments (i.e., entailments that aren't recognized by

all consequence relations for true theories); but they do not reject or otherwise transgress logical entailments.

In the end, logic's role in theology is its role in all of our true and 'complete' (as possible) theories: namely, to deliver the logical consequences of the claims in our theories. Logic is involved in all consequence relations for our true theories, including our theory of God (i.e., our theology). Logic achieves this universal role – the foundation of all entailment (or closure) relations on our true theories – in virtue of recognizing the widest space of possibilities. It's not that 'anything goes' by logic's lights; but a vast array of otherwise very strange possibilities is recognized by logic.

2.3 Logic and standard logic

Since Aquinas, who championed (one reading of) Aristotle, the range of logical possibilities has standardly been thought to be narrower than I, along with other so-called subclassical-logic theorists, take it to be. The standard class of possibilities is modeled by so-called classical-logic models. The term 'classical' does not denote Aristotle's logic, since Aristotle's logic was both impoverished (lacking, e.g., quantification and much else) and also arguably at odds with so-called classical logic [26]. In fact, what is today called 'classical logic' is a twentieth-century construction (or discovery, if you wish) ushered in largely by philosophers Frege, Russell and Whitehead.

This paper is not the place to rehearse the history of logic or the many debates on whether the standard account of logic gets things right. By my lights, for reasons argued elsewhere [8, 12, 19, 20, 28, 29, 31, 30], the correct account of logic is in fact weaker than the standard one: the space of logical possibilities is much wider than the standard account takes it to be. For present purposes my aim is only to present the weaker account (one that I believe to be the right account), leaving debate for other venues.

Nothing in orthodox Christianity demands the standard (twentieth-century) account of logic. Responsible theorizing calls for an exploration of alternative options. My chief aim is to advance what I take to be a natural Christology opened up by an alternative (though nonetheless mainstream) account of logic. By my lights, theology benefits from an informed view of logic; and ignoring the subclassical account(s) is not only unmotivated; it may in fact preclude the true Christology.

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3 Logic: subclassical

The aim of this section (and its subsections) is to present, as concisely as possible (without obliterating user-friendliness), the target account of logic: namely, what is called 'first-degree entailment' (FDE), most famously explored by Anderson, Belnap and Dunn [2, 3, 19, 20], but applied on a wide range of philosophical fronts by many philosophers. I believe but, for present purposes, shall only assume that FDE is the correct account of logic (qua universal consequence relation in the sense given above).[8] While arguing for the truth of this assumption is too much for the present paper, I shall defend the claim in some of the objections and replies (see §5).

3.1 Formal language

As above (see §2.2), logical consequence is a *formal* entailment relation; it holds in virtue of 'logical form'. The target forms are specified by logical vocabulary. Because the main action of the present paper can be seen at the so-called propositional (or sentential) level, we restrict the following to just that level.[9]

Following standard practice we use models – and a 'model' (formal, artificial) language – to specify the target entailment relation. Entailment, as above, is necessary truth-preservation over a space of relevant possibilities. In logic these possibilities are modeled by some sort of mathematical structure (sets, functions, relations); and the idea of a sentence's being true (false) at a possibility is modeled by relations that are defined on the given structures. Despite the level of mathematical abstraction the target remains always on 'real logical consequence' for our 'real language'. The 'logically valid forms' that are generated by the mathematical account are advanced as the 'real' logically valid forms.

In what follows the 'syntax' (grammar, vocabulary, and definition of sentences) is presented first, followed by the 'semantics' (model of truth and falsity conditions for the sentences), followed by the central target: namely, the logical consequence relation (logic).

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[8]For arguments towards this conclusion see [10].

[9]A generalization to the full stock of (standard) first-order vocabulary is not difficult but, again, is not necessary for purposes of this paper.

3.1.1 Syntax

The basic vocabulary (building blocks) of the language are as follows.

1. Vocabulary:

    (a) Logical Expressions:

        i. Unary connectives: † and ¬
        ii. Binary connectives: ∧ and ∨

    (b) Extralogical expressions:

        i. Unary predicates: 'P', 'Q', 'R' with or without numerical subscripts (unary: they take one name to make a sentence)
        ii. Names: lowercase letters of English, with or without numerical subscripts

    (c) Alogical expressions:

        i. Punctuation: right and left parentheses (viz., ')' and '(').

The syntax, while on its own (apart from a semantics) meaningless, is motivated by our target logic. In particular, the unary connectives ('unary' because they take exactly one sentence to make a sentence) will be treated in the semantics as the logical truth and falsity operators, and the binary connectives will be treated as the logical conjunction and disjunction operators.

Worth noting is that the predicates and names in the class of extralogical expressions are not necessary for specifying the logic; they are in there to add (I hope) some illumination on how atomic sentences are formally interpreted (see semantics below). One can simplify the syntax by ignoring any structure in atomic sentences and simply having standard 'propositional letters' as atomic sentences.

The *sentences* of the language are defined as follows.

2. Sentences of the language:

    (a) Atomics: let Π be a predicate and η a name. Then Π followed by η (viz., 'Πη') is an atomic (sentence).

    (b) Molecular (Compound): If A and B are sentences of the language, then so too are †A, ¬A, $(A \wedge B)$ and $(A \vee B)$.

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(c) Nothing else is a sentence of the language (except what follows from the first two clauses).

Examples of atomic sentences are Pa, Rb_{22}, and Qd. (See the list of predicates and the list of names under vocabulary, and then consult the definition of atomics above.) Examples of molecular sentences (i.e., sentences that contain at least one logical expression) are $\dagger Pa$, $(\neg Rb_{22} \vee (Qd \wedge Pa))$, and $(Qd \vee Pa)$.[10]

3.1.2 Semantics: towards truth and falsity conditions

The aim, again, is to precisely specify the logical consequence relation, which is an entailment relation, which is a truth-preserving relation over relevant possibilities. To specify the target truth-preserving relation for our model language we need to have an account of truth and falsity conditions for the sentences of the language.

As in standard accounts of logic a sentence's having a truth value (or, generally, 'semantic status') boils down to what's happening at the atomic level. In other words, our logical connectives are all 'truth-functional' in a familiar way: the semantic value of a sentence is a function of the semantic values of the atomic sentences. In this way, the semantic action takes place at the atomic level.

Atomic sentences get to have a semantic value (be it truth, falsity or something else) in a familiar way. Examples: if the subject term of the sentence picks out (denotes) an object of which the predicate term is true, then the given sentence is (at least) true; if the subject term of the sentence picks out an object of which the predicate term is false, then the given atomic sentence is (at least) false.[11] So, atomic sentences get their values in terms of what their parts (in our simple language, a unary predicate and a name) denote.

In general, we think of the 'possibilities' involved in logic as modeled by certain mathematical models. For our purposes, models contain both a denotation function δ, which supplies a semantic value to predicates and

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[10]To see that these are in fact official sentences, consult the definition of sentences above and simply let A be Pa, B be Qd, in which case, for example, $(Qd \wedge Pa)$ counts as a sentence; and now let A be Rb_{22}, in which case, $\neg Rb_{22}$ counts as a sentence; and now let A be $\neg Rb_{22}$ and B be $(Qd \wedge Pa)$, in which case $(\neg Rb_{22} \vee (Qd \wedge Pa))$ counts as a sentence.

[11]The 'at least' is redundant in standard (so-called classical) accounts of logic; but it is not redundant in the account advanced here, namely, FDE. This will be clear below.

names, and a domain D of objects – namely, all of the objects that exist according to the model.

3.1.3   Atomic sentences

A predicate Π's semantic value is modeled as a pair $\langle \Pi^+, \Pi^- \rangle$, where Π^+ (the so-called extension) contains all of the objects of which the predicate Π is true, and Π^- (the so-called antiextension) contains all of the objects of which Π is false. Where δ is a denotation function for a model, the predicate Π is given the semantic value $\delta(\Pi) = \langle \Pi^+, \Pi^- \rangle$ in a model, while each name η is given a denotation $\delta(\eta)$ from the set D of objects in the model. These resources are then used to provide a semantic status for atomic sentences.

Truth and falsity conditions for atomic sentences as follows, where δ is the 'denotation function' of a given model:

- *Truth in a model*: Atomic $\Pi\eta$ is true-in-a-model iff $\delta(\eta)$ is in Π^+.

- *Falsity in a model*: Atomic $\Pi\eta$ is false-in-a-model iff $\delta(\eta)$ is in Π^-.

Of paramount importance is the question of what constraints logic imposes on the interpretation of predicates (i.e., on the denotation of predicates).

The issue may be seen by considering two salient constraints.

- *Exhaustion:* every model is 'exhaustive' with respect to every predicate in the sense that *every object in the domain* is either in Π^+ or in Π^-.[12]

- *Exclusion:* every model is 'exclusive' with respect to every predicate in the sense that *no object in the domain* is in both Π^+ and Π^-.[13]

On the so-called classical account, logic imposes both exhaustion and exclusion. Logic, on that account, is exhaustive: it recognizes no possibility in which an object fails to be in either the extension or antiextension of a predicate – no possibility in which a predicate fails to be either at least true of the object or at least false of the object. (This rules out the logical possibility of 'truth-value gaps', where a sentence is neither true nor false for some reason – a sort of indeterminacy of semantic value.) Moreover, logic, on the 'classical' account, is exclusive: it recognizes no possibility in which an object falls into both the extension and antiextension of a predicate – no possibliity in which

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[12]In set-theoretic notation: $\Pi^+ \cup \Pi^- = D$ where D is the domain of the model.

[13]In set-theoretic notation: $\Pi^+ \cap \Pi^- = \emptyset$ where $\emptyset$ is the empty set.

a predicate is both true and false of an object. (This rules out the logical possibility of 'truth-value gluts', where a sentence is both true and false for some reason – a sort of overdeterminacy of semantic value.)

These constraints are overly strict from an alternative (viz., FDE) account of logic. The issue is too complex to argue here, but at least one consideration can be advanced. In particular, the classical-logic constraints (above) are very, very well-motivated when one focuses one's attention on a standard diet of examples from sciences like mathematics – the very diet to which the classical-logic account was historically directed. But reality is more than just mathematics. Reality appears to contain some surprising (however rare) phenomena that don't naturally fit into the confines a classical-logic assumptions. Reflection on language's strange phenomena (e.g., vagueness, paradoxical phenomena, and more) don't obviously fall into the confines of (classical-logic-governed) mathematics. Moreover, and most pressing for present purposes, reality involves a theological realm and its complex phenomena – including, from orthodox Christian theology, the fundamental problem of Christology. It may well be that all such extra-mathematical phenomena are truly described by a classical-logic-like consequence relation; but there is no obvious reason to think that logic itself demands as much.

Logic, on the FDE account, imposes *neither* exhaustion nor exclusion on its predicates. A model – representing one of the possibilities that logic recognizes – *may* treat a predicate as exclusive; it may treat it as exhaustive. On this account there are models in which a predicate may be neither true nor false of an object – the resulting atomic sentence 'gappy' in the model – and there are models in which a predicate may be both true and false (a 'glutty' model).

What the FDE account does *not* do is reject any classical-logic models. The account accepts all classical-logic models as genuine models (as representations of possibilities that logic recognizes); the account simply *expands* the space of models to recognize ones that go beyond the narrow confines of the classical-logic space. What this means is that if there is a classical-logic counterexample to an argument, then there is an FDE counterexample too – since FDE's spaces of models includes the narrower classical-logic ones. But the converse fails, since FDE recognizes more possibilities (more genuine models) than the classical-logic perspective allows.

3.1.4 Semantic values for molecular sentences

Atomic sentences achieve their semantic values as above (see §3.1.3). Models are as above, with no constraint that requires exhaustion or exclusion on predicates. This gives four possibilities for an atomic sentence:

- Just true: the denoted subject (i.e., denotation of the name) is in the extension of the given predicate but not in the antiextension.

- Just false: the denoted subject is in the antiextension of the given predicate but not in the extension.

- Gap (gappy): the denoted subject is in neither the extension nor the antiextension.

- Glut (glutty): the denoted subject is in both the extension and the antiextension.

Following useful terminology from Belnap [12] we shall say that an atomic is *at least true (false)* iff the denoted subject is at least in the extension (at least in the antiextension) of the given predicate. Then truth and falsity conditions for molecular sentences may be given as follows, where A and B are any sentences of the language:

- Nullations: $\dagger A$ is at least true in model m iff A is at least true in model m.

- Nullations: $\dagger A$ is at least false in model m iff A is at least false in model m.[14]

- Negations: $\neg A$ is at least true in model m iff A is at least false in model m.

- Negations: $\neg A$ is at least false in model m iff A is at least true in model m.

- Disjunctions: $A \vee B$ is at least true in model m iff either A is at least true in m or B is at least true in m.

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[14]Nullations are included here for completeness (and the symmetry of the boolean quartet) but shall be ignored – because redundant – in what follows.

- Disjunctions: $A \lor B$ is at least false in model m iff both A is at least false in m and B is at least false in m.

- Conjunctions: $A \land B$ is at least true in model m iff both A is at least true in m and B is at least true in m.

- Conjunctions: $A \land B$ is at least false in model m iff either A is at least false in m or B is at least false in m.

What is important to emphasize, as discussed again below, is that these truth and falsity conditions *are precisely the same conditions* used in the standard classical-logic account. The difference, of course, is that the classical-logic account ignores the logical possibilities of 'gaps' and 'gluts', and so both the 'at least' phrase and the falsity conditions are redundant in the classical-logic picture. But, again, if one's aim is to accommodate the full space of logical possibilities – and not just those that are relevant to (for example) standard mathematics (governed by classical logic) – then the fuller account of truth and falsity conditions is required.

3.2   Logic: the target consequence relation

Finally, the target relation – namely, logical consequence – may be specified in terms of the given FDE models and truth/falsity conditions. The consequence relation is a relation between a set of sentences X and a sentence A. The definition is this:

- X logically entails A (equivalently: A is a logical consequence of X) iff there is no model in which everything in X is at least true but A is not even at least true.

When X logically entails A we say that the argument from X to A is logically valid – that is, valid by logic's lights. We use $\vdash$ to represent the logical consequence relation, sometimes writing '$X \vdash A$' as shorthand for the claim that X logically entails A according to the given (FDE) consequence relation.[15]

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[15]When the set X contains exactly one sentence B we shall write '$B \vdash A$' instead of the explicit $\{B\} \vdash A$. Similarly, when the set X is empty we shall write '$\vdash A$' instead of the more explicit '$\emptyset \vdash A$'. (This notation is not central for present purposes but is useful to have at hand.)

Some key *invalid argument forms*, relevant to the project of contradictory Christology (and also other non-theological phenomena) are these, where '$X \nvdash A$' indicates that X does not logically entail A:

- $A \wedge \neg A \nvdash B$. (Hence, as far as logic is concerned, a theory can contain a contradiction $A \wedge \neg A$ without thereby entailing all sentences whatsoever.)

- $B \nvdash A \vee \neg A$. (Hence, a theory is not required by logic alone to contain all instances of the so-called law of excluded middle – a principle that may well be in force for some important theory-specific consequence relations, but isn't required by logic itself.)

On the other hand, all standard De Morgan interaction between logical expressions remains in force as the chief concern of logic. For example, where $\dashv\vdash$ indicates logical equivalence (i.e., two-way logical entailment):

- $\neg(A \wedge B) \dashv\vdash \neg A \vee \neg B$.

- $\neg(A \vee B) \dashv\vdash \neg A \wedge \neg B$.

- $\neg\neg A \dashv\vdash \dagger A \dashv\vdash A$.

In effect, the FDE picture is one in which logic demands De Morgan interaction among the logical expressions, but that is all that logic itself demands. The harder question of whether atomic sentences are 'gappy' or 'glutty' is a theory-specific matter for the given phenomena; logic itself recognizes possibilities in which atomic sentences take on any of the four (logically possible) semantic values.

3.2.1   Chief virtues of this account of logic

There are at least three salient virtues of this (FDE) account of logic.

The first virtue is that the familiar truth/falsity conditions are maintained, as above. There is no revision of the truth/falsity conditions; there is instead a more complete and explicit account. In this way, the 'meanings' of the standard logical vocabulary remain as per the standard (classical-logic) account; it's just that the former account is to be seen as in fact a restricted account: it is a theory-specific consequence relation (e.g., for mathematical theories) that restricts its truth and falsity conditions only to the logical possibilities in which 'exclusion' and 'exhaustion' are satisfied. There is nothing

at all wrong with the resulting consequence relation on such a restriction; it's just that, as above, the full space of logical possibilities demands a fuller and explicit specification of truth/falsity conditions – namely, the ones involved in the advanced (FDE) account.

A second virtue is that the resulting logic is clearly topic-neutral by not taking a stand on whether gappy or glutty atomic sentences are ruled out. Such an issue, as far as logic is concerned, is a topic-central one for theories to figure out. This is a virtue for an account of logic itself; it is a frustration for the epistemological process of determining the true theory of various phenomena, but that's a different matter. Epistemology (or rational 'change in view') is a complicated but distinct discipline from a theory of logical consequence [9, 21].

A third virtue is most relevant to the principal project of a contradictory Christology: namely, that logic does not force unique, strange phenomena into the cramped confines of classical-logic possibilities. While logic itself is silent on whether theorists *should* entertain a contradictory (glutty) theory of a given phenomenon – or, similarly, a gappy one, or an entirely 'classical-logic' theory – logic itself, contrary to the standard account, doesn't rule it out. And in the face of extraordinary or strikingly bizarre phenomena it is a good thing to have a very wide space of possibilities to work with in constructing a true theory of the rare entity.

4 Contradictory Christology

It should now be plain that a logically contradictory Christology is not ruled out by logic itself. One must now ask why it should be ruled out. I claim that the view is viable. In particular, the key, fundamental thesis of orthodox Christology is that Christ has two – apparently contradictory – natures. The fundamental problem for orthodox Christology is to respond to the apparent contradiction. While many sophisticated theories have spelled out ways to conceive of the apparent contradiction of Christ as non-contradictory, few (none?), to my knowledge, have argued against the position being advanced here: namely, that the true Christology is in fact logically contradictory, just as it appears to be.

4.1 Christ as the fundamental 'problem'

The fundamental problem of Christology is simple to see. The apparent contradiction is glaring; one needn't be steeped in the conciliar texts or theological tomes to be confronted by it.

Orthodox Christianity maintains that Christ is the divine, omniscient God who also exemplifies non-divine human nature with its imperfect knowledge and imperfect understanding. The apparent contradiction is vivid, fueled by the foundational role of Christ in orthodox Christianity. An omniscient being could not have our imperfect understanding of the pains and frustrations of our limited epistemic states unless – and here is the problem in a nutshell – the being were not omniscient. The apparent contradiction fuels the pull of the Kenotic tradition in Christology which, against orthodox Christianity (my focus here), puts priority on exactly one of the two natures. The pull of Kenotic Christology arises from the simple contradiction of Christ's needing to be imperfect in his understanding and knowledge in order to have the experience of imperfect epistemic agents; but to be worthy of worship Christ needs to be divine and perfect in his understanding and knowledge. The fundamental 'problem' of Christology is simple to see from the role that Christ occupies: having the divine properties as God worthy of worship but having the logical complement those properties. (Contradiction.) The way that this is achieved – the way that Christ realizes the apparently contradictory role – is exactly as orthodoxy records it: the having of two contradictory natures, the one divine and the other human. The Conciliar texts use language like 'passible and impassible' and 'capable of suffering and incapable of suffering' [32, p. 162], but the explicit contradiction comes from standard paraphrases of 'incapable of suffering' as 'not capable of suffering'.[16]

On the (logically) contradictory Christology being proposed Christ plays the foundational role of both having the features required to fully experience suffering as we experience it while at the exact same time being worthy of

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[16]Timothy Pawl's recent contribution to the fundamental problem of Christology seeks to avoid the apparent contradiction by redoing the natural truth conditions – or satisfaction conditions – of predicates such as 'incapable' and 'impassible'. The view is one against which my current proposal must ultimately be weighed, but I leave that for later work. The aim at the moment is simply to defend the viability of a simple and (by my lights) natural contradictory Christology. [I do agree with much of Pawl's work. A major disagreement is the correct account of logic itself (Pawl thinks that it's largely standard while, as above, I think that it is weaker than the standard account), though we are, I think, in agreement about the role of logic (qua logical entailment) in theology.]

worship and incapable – not capable – of such suffering or imperfect understanding of such suffering. The contradiction of Christ, on the proposed Christology, is not there because the Conciliar-text authors were sloppy; it's there because Christ's foundational role in Christianity requires something contradictory – and thereby something extraordinary, unique and awesome. Of course, if logic itself required that a contradiction – the logical conjunction of a sentence and its logical negation – entails outright absurdity, then contradictory Christology would be absurd and immediately off the table. But logic doesn't rule it out. (Recall that $A \land \neg A$ does not logically entail arbitrary B, unlike in classical logic.) And so the question is whether the apparent contradiction of Christ is motivated. That orthodox Christianity – and the Conciliar texts that at least in large part define it – makes vivid the apparent contradiction of Christ is good reason to think that the apparent contradiction is motivated.[17]

In short, contradictory Christology responds to the fundamental problem by accepting the apparent contradictions as genuine contradictions. This is not simply 'because we can' (given the correct account of logic); the view is motivated by the screamingly apparent contradiction at the heart of Christ's role – perfect God but also as human in imperfection and limitation as you and me. On a mistaken view of logic the proposed solution to the fundamental problem would be off the table. And if the truth about the apparently contradictory Christ is not ultimately contradictory, philosophers and theologians must – as they have and continue to do – scramble to avoid the apparent contradiction at all costs. But we need not carry a mistaken view of logic. And once dropped we may fully explore the logical possibility of embracing the contradiction of Christ at face value.

4.2   The rarity of true contradictory theories

Before addressing a number of objections, which aim to fill out the proposal further, a very common reaction should be addressed: I am not hereby proposing that theologians should seek to find contradictions willy nilly. The reason that we generally reject all logical contradictions is that they are ultimately few and far between. And this is why so few of our true theories are contradictory (i.e., negation-inconsistent). Logically possible contradictions

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[17]Pawl [22] gives a hermeneutical (charity-driven) argument against contradictory Christology. I take this up in the objections-replies section §5.

are nonetheless ruled out in many theories as theoretically impossible, given the nature of the theory's target phenomenon. Standard mathematics rules out – or blocks off – the logical possibility of contradictions as *mathematically* impossible; and much of physical theory, biological theory, many metaphysical theories do the same. But in strange cases of extraordinary phenomena the truth may require a contradiction.

My proposal, again, is not that theologians ought to seek out contradictions; the proposal is that Christ's unique role motivates a contradictory account – his contradictory exemplification of two (contradictory) natures. Having the two contradictory natures brings about the truths entailed by having the one and the falsehoods of having the other (and vice versa): Christ can suffer and Christ cannot suffer. Said together just so is jarring; but such is Christ's role in the Christian worldview. As a methodological principle, we should not seek out contradictions but we should be open to the rare cases that motivate them. The having of two complementary natures is one case that appears to motivate a contradictory theory (a contradictory Christology).

Consider an analogy with Truth and Falsity. These are complementary properties in the sense that having them both (logically) entails a contradiction. Were there to be some entity that exemplifies *both* of these properties the entity would be a rare one, something surprising – though perhaps not properly mysterious. As above, I maintain that a very respectable – and, indeed, correct – view of logic is that logic itself does not rule out such an entity, something that is both true and false. Logic enjoys its role of being universal and topic-neutral by being very rich in the possibilities that it recognizes. As it turns out, there are entities – admittedly strange and rare – that (arguably) instantiate or exemplify or have both of the given complementary properties. Witness the familiar Liar paradox:[18]

✓ The ticked sentence is false.

This sentence is true if and only if it is false. While (on my view) logic itself

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[18]That a true theory of these sorts of peculiar entities (the Liar sentence or similar property/set sentences) might be contradictory is an idea discussed by many, including Asenjo [4, 5], Beall [7, 8], Dunn [19, 20], Priest [25, 28], Routley [30], Routley & Meyer [31], and many others, though Priest's work has championed and defended the view more than any other work on the topic. Indeed, Priest's career and large body of work has focused largely on advocating and defending the spread of contradictory theories beyond this limited area.

won't force the issue,[19] the ticked sentence is a candidate for the very rare case in which the complementary properties of truth and falsity are exhibited together. As theorists we have a methodological goal of resolving as many claims into the true and the false as possible. Logic, as above, doesn't demand as much; but systematic theorizing motivates the methodological goal. And with that goal, one is quickly motivated to the view that the ticked sentence is false and also true – a contradiction [10].

It is important to emphasize that the ticked sentence is a strange and unexpected case. Moreover, by accepting that the ticked sentence is a (surprising) case of an entity that exemplifies complementary properties we are not thereby committed to accepting that all peculiar sentences are truly contradictory. The very nature of the ticked sentence – a twisted prima facie contradiction – motivates a contradictory theory of it; but few other sentences are like that.

And the same is true of Christ: his role is prima facie contradictory; and his realization of the role via complementary natures reinforces the contradiction. Indeed, when one asks how something could realize a contradiction, orthodox Christology has provided a clear and fascinating answer: namely, the having of two contradictory natures. In the end, when the truth is laid bare, Christ may be the unique contradictory being in reality. That's for future theorizing to tell. For now, contradictory Christology affirms the apparently contradictory orthodox Christology as genuinely contradictory. Christ can suffer; Christ cannot suffer. It is true that Christ can suffer; it is false that Christ can suffer. This is jarring, and even in some ways mysterious; but orthodox Christianity has advanced the role of Christ to be just so: jarring and in various ways mysterious. In this case, the mystery is (at least in part) that there is a being whose very existence entails contradictions – that he is perfect and all-knowing but is imperfect and has limited knowledge (and so on). Theological traditions – from negative theology to Kenotic theology to the latest analytic-theological proposals – have one and all tried to avoid the logical contradiction of Christ. While I have not argued against those traditions in favor of a contradictory Christology I think that it is plainly as viable an approach to (orthodox) Christology as the others. Future debate will ultimately tell. For now I respond to a number of objections.

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[19]In order for logic itself to force the issue one needs something like the law of excluded middle, which is not valid according to the logic (viz., FDE) which I've advanced here [10].

5   Objections and Replies

O0: From some to all contradictions

Objection: Once we allow some contradictions we have no grounds to reject any contradictions.

Reply. This is simply unmotivated. Consider the directly analogous claim: once we admit that quantum reality is funny we have no grounds to reject that all of reality is funny.

   For further discussion of this sort of (unwarranted) objection, see Priest's work [28].

O1: Historically suspect

Objection: the proposal is historically suspect. According to Gregory Dunn, Leo the Great maintained that 'Jesus could be both impassible and passible at the same time *without there being any contradiction*' [emphasis mine] [18].[20]   Hence, inasmuch as Leo's texts were ratified as part of orthodox Christology the proposed contradictory Christology is historically suspect.

Reply. Various replies are in order.

   First, distinguish two senses of 'contradiction', one being a sentence which is the logical conjunction of a sentence and its logical negation, and the other being an 'explosive sentence', a sentence that, according to a theory's consequence or entailment relation, entails every sentence (of the language of the theory). The first sense is the one involved in the proposed contradictory Christology. I agree with Leo and many others that the true Christology has no true explosive sentences – that is, no claims that are both true according to the Christology and also entail all sentences according to the Christology's consequence relation.

   Second, one needs to be careful in evaluating the account of logic involved in conciliar texts. It may've been that the best known accounts of logic were silent on too many critical issues. (Even Aristotle's account of logic was inadequate for evaluating many important argument forms. That's why Frege and Russell and Whitehead built the classical-logic account, mainly to give an account of logic as far as standard mathematics is concerned.)

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[20]This quotation is used by Pawl [23, p. 92] for different dialectical purposes, but the passage nicely frames the current objection. I discuss an importantly related objection, based on Pawl's work, below.

O2: Hermeneutically suspect

Objection: the proposal is hermeneutically suspect by being uncharitable in reading conciliar texts. Pawl [22], focused only on Conciliar Christology (with which my proposal is intended to be compatible), implicitly argues that it's *uncharitable* to charge the conciliar fathers with advancing a contradictory Christology:[21]

> Had they really believed these five pairs of predicates to be incompatible, they would not have affirmed that Christ is both visible and invisible, incomprehensible and comprehensible, unlimited and limited, impassible and passible, and inexpressible and expressible. It is a rare feat to be able to contradict oneself so forcefully in a single sentence. Any one of these five conjunctive pairs would be enough to entail a contradiction, and the fathers do it five times over! [22, p. 64]

The point is that it's at best uncharitable to interpret the conciliar fathers as advancing anything close to a genuinely contradictory Christology.

Reply. There are two chief problems with Pawl's argument.[22]

The first problem is that Pawl's (charity-driven) hermeneutical argument comes with an uncharitable reading of the conciliar fathers. Either the conciliar fathers used the key predicates (e.g., 'passible' and 'impassible', etc.) in non-standard and yet undefined ways or they used the predicates in their standard ways with their standard but glaringly contradictory consequences. The more charitable reading, as I see the matter, is the latter disjunct. On Pawl's view the conciliar fathers are using the key predicates in a non-standard way. After all, on the standard usage the given pairs of predicates are complementary (in the sense that their joint satisfaction entails a contradiction); and that is logically impossible according to Pawl. But the conciliar fathers are not simply using key terms in a non-standard way; *they knowingly left their usage completely undefined.* We don't get the special definitions (satisfaction conditions) until Pawl's early twenty-first century work

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[21]To be clear, Pawl's arguments are not directed at the contradictory Christology that I have aimed to defend. His arguments, like much of standard theology, ignores such a Christology. But Pawl's charity-driven hermeneutical argument (below) demands a reply.

[22]I think that Pawl's work on the fundamental problem is very important, and I continue to learn much from it. I intend to do a much more extensive discussion of it vis-a-vis contradictory Christology in the future. For now, my aim is only to give an initial defense of the viability of contradictory Christology.

[24]. Why would the conciliar fathers not flag their special – and undefined – usage of (for example) 'incomprehensible' and 'comprehensible' (and 'capable' and 'incapable' and so on) if they didn't intend the usual entailments to hold? Pawl doesn't answer this question but maintains that their usage was indeed non-standard because otherwise the Christology is contradictory. This leads to the second problem with Pawl's argument.

The second problem is that Pawl's argument overlooks the possibility that these 'incompatible' – that is, contradictory (i.e., contradiction-entailing) – predicates are precisely what is required for Christ to play the unique role that Christ plays. That Christ must be incapable (entails: not capable) of suffering in order to be worthy of worship while being capable of suffering to experience our suffering is contradictory; but it's what the conciliar fathers concluded – even if they were not fully clear on how such an extraordinary entity works in detail. If we hold fast to the standard account of logic (so-called classical logic) then Pawl's hermeneutical argument has force, of course; but I think that that account of logic is misplaced.

O3: Implausible

Objection: accepting that Christ exemplified a property and its logical complement is downright implausible. As such the proposed contradictory Christology is implausible.

Reply. If the objection is an empirical claim about what human believers can in fact believe then the objection needs to be evaluated empirically. But there are philosophers who in fact believe of various entities that they instantiate a property and the property's logical complement. Pending further empirical tests such philosophers appear to be counterexamples to the sort of empirical charge of implausibility advanced in the objection.

O4: Ad hoc

Objection: the proposal is ad hoc. The fundamental problem of Christology is a difficult one to solve. The proposal points to an alternative logic that can handle contradictions without reducing a theory to all-out absurdity; and then the proposal simply hitches the logic to Christology without independent motivation.

Reply. This objection is misplaced on two fronts. To begin, the alternative (subclassical) account of logic has been motivated in the philosophy of logic

by a wide range of theology-independent phenomena, from concerns peculiar to 'relevance' of logic [2, 3] to modeling various inconsistent but not flat-out absurd theories (e.g., so-called naive account of sets or properties) to strange phenomena from language (e.g., paradoxes) [27]. So, the given logic itself is not ad hoc.

The second front on which the objection is misplaced is the charge specific to Christology, namely, that a contradictory Christology is an ad hoc solution to the fundamental problem. But this is simply wrong. The very conciliar texts that at least in part define orthodox Christianity carry the prima facie contradiction of Christ on their jackets. That the true Christology is in fact logically contradictory is a natural response to the fundamental problem; it has been long ignored simply because of a restricted account of logic.

O5: Truth requires coherence

Objection:[23] *Coherence is a necessary condition for truth*, and a coherent Christology rules out contradictory Christology – since a *true list of Christ's properties cannot contain contradictory pairs* (cf. Cross [17, p. 480]).

Reply. Setting aside epistemic and question-begging accounts of 'coherence' (as, respectively, irrelevant and uncharitable) the objection rests on a true principle: namely, that true theories must 'hang together' in a way that avoids outright triviality, where triviality is the uncontroversially absurd 'trivial theory' – namely, the theory containing *all* sentences in the language of the theory.[24] On the standard view of logic no logically contradictory theory can 'hang together' (cohere) in the given way, since logic itself – on the standard view – takes every logically contradictory theory to the trivial theory. But that view of logic is not forced on theology; a more natural account of logic is in the (so-called subclassical) vicinity of FDE. While true

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[23]This objection is in the spirit of leading work on Christology. While he is not focused on contradictory Christology in the relevant passage (see below), I frame the current objection in terms drawn from Richard Cross' state-of-the-art discussion of the fundamental problem (in his 'The incarnation') [17, p. 480].

[24]For example, the standard (say) theory of arithmetic (say, Peano Arithmetic) is written in a certain language, namely, the language of the theory; and the trivial theory of arithmetic, relative to that language, is the theory that contains all sentences of the language. (There is absolutely nothing special about arithmetic. It's used here as a very simple example of the term 'trivial theory' as it occurs in contemporary philosophy of logic.)

theories demand coherence, a logically contradictory theory can be coherent, contrary to the objection's presupposition.

O6: Other theological contradictions

Objection: it looks like the proposed Christology naturally generalizes to other parts of theology. In particular, doesn't the general proposal require that every apparent contradiction in theology be treated as contradictory – including, perhaps especially, the very familiar 'logical' puzzles involving God's omniscience, omnipotence (a too-heavy stone) and the like?

Reply. No. While logic leaves open such possibilities – and theologians should be aware of such logical possibilities – the contradiction needs to be motivated too. While the familiar 'logical' problems of orthodox Christianity's 'omnigod' are candidates for a contradictory proposal, the contradiction involved is not as clear in (for example) conciliar sources as the screamingly apparent contradiction of Christ's role and two natures. I do not rule out a contradictory resolution of other theological problems but, pending debate, my proposal is restricted to the fundamental problem of Christology.[25]

O7: Just highfalutin theory

Objection: This is all just highfalutin theory; it has nothing to do with the real work of Christology or theology in general.

Reply. That's just wrong. Theologians are theoreticians who, if aiming to get at the true theory of God, seek to record not only the fundamental truths but also all *consequences* of those truths. And this requires that theologians construct an appropriate consequence (closure) relation for theology. And to do this the theologian must take a stance on the fundamental closure relation: namely, logic itself. To think that it's obvious that logic is as per

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[25]For what it is worth my own view is that many such familiar 'logical' possibilities motivate a 'gappy' (vs 'glutty') theology – for example, where certain claims are neither true nor false – but this is for another occasion. See Beall & Cotnoir's work [11] on the stone problem as an example of a gappy theology which is perfectly compatible with the FDE-logic-based theology advanced here. Moreover, my own view of apparent trinitarian contradictions is to rely on non-transitive identity – a theology-specific account of identity that isn't ruled out by logic (since, on my view, logic itself is neutral on identity). But these issues are for a much bigger project. I mention them here only to illustrate that the proposed contradictory Christology is not wedded to gluts (truth-value gluts) at every theological turn.

the standard account of logic (viz., so-called classical) is to think in error. Even defenders of the standard account of logic reject that it's obvious that logic is per the standard account.

Moreover, there is a genuine practical upside to contradictory Christology. The role of Christ demands an entity who is not divine, who is limited, who can truly understand and experience our limited and imperfect ignorance of what it would be like to escape limitations (something we can only imperfectly imagine); but the role demands that Christ be perfect, divine and limitless, the God worthy of worship by all. The fundamental problem of Christology is that this role is contradictory; it demands realization at the price of a contradictory being. Christians may rest assured that Christ is that contradiction: truly perfect; truly imperfect – all in the standard senses of those terms. Hiding the full force of Christ's contradictory being by trying to block the full contradictory consequences that follow from it is to hide the full spectrum of properties that Christ exemplifies – and that Christians need Christ to exemplify. A full understanding of Christ's contradictory being may be beyond our currently limited epistemic reach; but Christ's reality – by all orthodox lights – is not in any way constrained by our epistemic reach.

O8: Not theology

Objection: The proposed theory is not theology. Theologians need not master the technical tools of contemporary logic in order to give a true theory of Christ – a true Christology – or a true theory of any other theological phenomenon. But the advanced theory – the proposed contradictory Christology – requires a mastery of just such technical logic.[26]

Reply. The viability of any Christology – not just that of contradictory Christology – relies on logic itself, on the logical consequence relation at the bottom of all consequence relations for our true theories (including our true theory of God). The view that theologians don't need to master (or at least be competent with respect to) the given relation – logical consequence itself – is unmotivated. That theology is not about logic is absolutely clear and equally true. But theology needn't be about logic in order for logic to be of fundamental importance in the practice of doing theology. Theology relies on logic; and theologians need to be aware of logic's constraints – and, more to the present paper, logic's space of possibilities.

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[26]Compare debates over the importance of analytic theology [15].

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6 Towards future theology

Part of one's task as a theologian is to record theological truth. Treating various claims as axiomatic or basic or bedrock is the beginning. More work arises in constructing a consequence relation for theology – a relation that 'completes' the theory by delivering the consequences of the theory. Any such consequence relation needs to be in step with logic itself – the foundational consequence relation of all of our true theories. Contemporary philosophy of logic has provided good reason to think that logic is subclassical – properly weaker than standard (so-called classical) logic. This has direct effects on the space of theological options.

In this paper I have sketched one new option for Christology. What is important to emphasize is that the proposal is not an unmotivated hack brought about as an ad hoc patch in theology. Logic is different from what many theologians believe. And the truth of Christ may, accordingly, be very different from what most theologians believe too; the truth may be as logically contradictory as the fundamental 'problem' paints. My hope is that this paper puts contradictory Christology on the theological table. Debate must now measure its promise against the other proposed solutions.

This paper is part of a larger project that aims to measure the advanced contradictory Christology against standard accounts (including, but not limited to, the many 'qua' accounts, 'mereological' accounts, 'negative-theological' accounts, and more). The larger project aims not only to spell out the proposed contradictory Christology further; it aims to argue directly for the position vis-a-vis limitations of standard accounts. But that remains for a larger project. This paper, as above, has the aim of defending a place at the table for contradictory Christology.[27]

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