

Title: Modified Kenotic Christology, the Trinity and Christian Orthodoxy

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ABSTRACT

There has been a recent resurgence of interest in the exploration of the resources of kenotic Christology as a way of countering charges that the traditional doctrine of the Incarnation is incoherent. However, John Hick and others have charged the proponents of this strategy with saving coherence at the price of orthodoxy. Some analytic philosophers of religion and philosophical theologians (notably Stephen T. Davis, C. Stephen Evans and Ronald J. Feenstra) defend a modified version of kenotic Christology, one that they think does not contradict the major creedal Christological statements. But to this date no one has produced an extended study of the relation of modified kenotic Christology to classical Christian orthodoxy.

In chapters 1 and 2 I introduce both this study and the modified kenotic model under consideration. The third chapter explores the ability of modified kenotic Christology to account for the biblical witness to the humanity as well as the divinity of Christ. Chapters 4 and 5 are focused on the issues of Arianism, Apollinarianism, Monophysitism and Monotheletism. Drawing upon some relevant patristic scholarship, I investigate whether or not modified kenotic Christology entails or implies any of these views. In chapter 6 I explore the possibility that modified kenotic Christology entails a sort of tritheism on account of its doctrine of the Trinity. Finally, in chapter 7 I offer a conclusion and point out some areas that await further study.

In this dissertation I argue that a modified kenotic Christology need not fall prey to heterodoxy. I argue that this modified kenotic model of the Incarnation does not violate the biblical and traditional standards of orthodoxy insofar as it does not entail either Arianism, Apollinarianism, Monophysitism or tritheism, and I suggest that a modified kenotic Christology may be at once coherent, orthodox and religiously meaningful.