

Title: The Son of God Beyond the Flesh: A Historical and Theological Study of the *Extra Calvinisticum*

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the doctrine that the incarnate Son of God was not limited to fleshly, human existence but continued to exist *etiam extra carnem* (“even beyond the flesh”), a doctrine that has come to be known as the *extra Calvinisticum*. The study argues that the doctrine had a significant role in the thought of three important theologians of the patristic, medieval, and Reformation eras—namely, Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444), Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), and Zacharias Ursinus (1534-1583)—and explains how each of these theologians employed the doctrine. In general, however, the *extra* dropped from the theological scene by the end of the nineteenth century due in part to shifts in metaphysics and theological method and a growing weariness of theological divisions in the church. The exposition of the doctrine’s use in these three premodern and early modern figures reveals the older significance of the doctrine and sets the stage for a discussion of contemporary efforts at reappropriation.

For Cyril of Alexandria, the transcendence of the incarnate Son serves as a tool with which to defend the complete deity of the Son and the Son’s continued personal divine activity beyond the flesh. Aquinas, however, employs the doctrine of the Son’s existence beyond the flesh to defend Christ’s true humanity in the case of his incarnational descent and descent into hell during the three days after his death. Aquinas also uses the traditional *totus/totum* distinction to distinguish how Christ remains present even when he is not present in a human way. In the context of post-Reformation polemics, Zacharias Ursinus employs the *extra* for more than a polemical purpose and articulates the doctrine with an eye toward the benefits and comfort that it holds out to believers.

The dissertation closes with an examination of twentieth-century and contemporary efforts at recovering the *extra*, beginning with Karl Barth and Helmut Thielicke. Here it is argued that the contemporary trend of making the *extra* a theological principle or extending the doctrine into areas beyond Christology is a misuse of the doctrine. Other recent uses of the doctrine are also evaluated and, ultimately, it is argued that the *extra Calvinisticum* remains significant, though it ought to remain within the bounds of Christology.