Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers

Volume 32 | Issue 2

Article 1

4-1-2015

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Recommended Citation

Jedwab, Joseph (2015) "Against the Geachian Theory of the Trinity and Incarnation," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 32 : Iss. 2 , Article 1.

DOI: 10.5840/faithphil201541335

Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol32/iss2/1>

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AGAINST THE GEACHIAN THEORY OF THE TRINITY AND INCARNATION

Joseph Jedwab

Relative-identity theories of the Trinity and Incarnation are worth another look. But not all such theories are the same. One important difference among them concerns restricted quantification. Peter Geach proposes two theses: the sortal relativity of identity and the irreducibility of restricted quantification. Every relative-identity theory of the Trinity and Incarnation applies Geach's first thesis. But only what I call "the Geachian theory" applies both theses. I argue that any such Geachian theory faces significant theoretical disadvantages. Towards the end, I propose a closely related but non-Geachian relative-identity theory that doesn't share those theoretical disadvantages.

There are many theories of the Trinity and Incarnation.¹ Among them are relative-identity theories. *Prima facie*, the doctrine of the Trinity implies the sortal relativity of identity thesis, which says that, where "*R*" and "*S*"² are sortals, it could be that for some *x* and *y*, *x* and *y* are the same *R* but different *S*s. The Father and the Son are the same God, else they are two Gods, which implies polytheism and so is false. But the Father and the Son are different divine Persons, else they are one divine Person, which implies the Sabellian heresy and so is false. So the Father and the Son are the same God but different divine Persons. So relative-identity theories are worth another look. But, in the contemporary literature, few are spelled out in detail.³ And not all such theories are the same. One important difference among these theories concerns restricted quantification. Peter Geach proposes, among others, two main theses: the sortal relativity of

¹For surveys see Michael Rea, "The Trinity," and Richard Cross, "The Incarnation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, ed. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²I use italicized capital letters as schematic variables for sortals. When I add quotation marks to them, I mention the values. When I don't add quotation marks, I use the values.

³There are three: Peter van Inwagen, *God, Knowledge, and Mystery* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); James Cain, "The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Logic of Relative Identity," *Religious Studies* 25 (1989), 141–152; and Jeffrey Brower, "Abelard on the Trinity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Abelard*, ed. Jeffrey Brower and Kevin Guilfooy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Michael Rea, "The Trinity," and "Hylomorphism and the incarnation," in *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, ed. Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), and Jeffrey Brower and Michael Rea, "Material Constitution and the Trinity," *Faith and Philosophy* 22 (2005), 57–76.

identity and the irreducibility of restricted quantification.⁴ Every relative-identity theory applies Geach's first thesis to the Trinity and Incarnation.⁵ But only what I call "the Geachian theory," which only James Cain has spelled out, applies both theses. I argue that, not only Cain's version, but any Geachian theory faces significant theoretical disadvantages. Towards the end, I propose a closely related but non-Geachian relative-identity theory that doesn't share those theoretical disadvantages.

1. *The Doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation*

The Church, in her conciliar documents, teaches the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation.⁶ The doctrine of the Trinity implies that there is only one God, there are only three divine Persons (i.e., the Father, the Son, and the Spirit), and each divine Person is God. The divine Persons have the same nature (i.e., deity). Since the Father is God and every other divine Person has the same nature as the Father, every other divine Person is also God. So the Trinity are three Persons who have the same nature. The doctrine of the Incarnation implies that the Son is God and human, having a rational soul and body. The Son, who has the divine nature, takes upon himself (or assumes) another nature (i.e., a humanity). Since we are humans and the Son has the same nature as we do, he is also human. So the Son is one Person who has two natures.

What do we mean here by "Person"? We might say that this is a technical term and define it functionally: Persons are what there are three of in the Trinity (and one of in the Son). We can, however, say what occupies this functional role. Something is a person just if some first- or second-person singular pronoun (literally) applies to it.⁷ It is clear that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are persons. Such pronouns apply to them. It is also clear, however, that they are different persons. The claim that the Father is the same person as the Son implies the Sabellian heresy. And if the Father were the same person as the Son, the Father could truly say of himself,

⁴See Peter Geach, *Reference and Generality*, 3rd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), §§30, 34, 110, and "Replies," in *Peter Geach: Philosophical Encounters*, ed. Harry A. Lewis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991).

⁵It's obvious how the sortal relativity of identity thesis applies to the doctrine of the Trinity. I explain later how it applies to the doctrine of the Incarnation too.

⁶See the decrees of the first four ecumenical councils in Norman Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol.1 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990).

⁷Cf. Peter Geach, *The Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 75–76 and van Inwagen, *God, Knowledge*, 231, 263–268. By "just if" I mean *if and only if*. This provides a necessary and sufficient condition for being a person. I do not intend, however, to provide a definition or explanation of what it is to be a person. When we apply such pronouns to non-persons (e.g., ships or pets), we personify: we don't literally apply such pronouns. And if I were to personify a non-person and if you were to ask me whether I intend to apply the pronoun literally, I would deny it. Incidentally, this characterization of being a person has an interesting implication for the doctrine of the Incarnation. If such pronouns (literally) apply to Christ's human nature, then the human nature is a person. But this doesn't imply that the nature is a different person from the Son. And so this doesn't imply the Nestorian heresy. For it might be that the Son and his human nature are the same person.

using a first-person singular pronoun, "I am the Son, who as a human suffered and died on the cross," which implies the Patripassion heresy. It also seems that God is a person. Such pronouns apply to God. Scripture and tradition consistently represent God as someone to whom first- and second-person singular pronouns apply.⁸ Moreover, it seems any rational being (i.e., any being that has an intellect and will) is a person, and God is a rational being. Furthermore, it seems any being that is perfect in power, knowledge, and goodness is a person, and the concept of God is that of a perfect being, which implies being perfect in all these ways. Finally, since the Father is God and the Father is a person, some person is God. But, where "*R*" and "*S*" are sortals, by conversion, if some *R* is *S*, then it seems some *S* is *R*. So if some person is God, it seems some God is a person. And so, since there's only one God, it seems God is a person.⁹ At least, it seems a theoretical disadvantage for any theory of the Trinity or Incarnation to imply that God is not a person.

Philosophical Problems for the Doctrines

These doctrines give rise to various philosophical problems. The problems I focus on here are the logical problem of the Trinity and the modal problem of the Incarnation. The logical problem of the Trinity concerns the apparent logical inconsistency of three claims:

- (1) There is only one God.
- (2) There are only three divine persons.
- (3) Every divine person is God.

It seems that any two of these claims imply the negation of the third. If we formalize (1)–(3) into first-order predicate logic with identity in the standard way, we have the following:

Where we interpret "*Gx*" as *x* is God and "*Dx*" as *x* is a divine person,

- (1') $\exists x(Gx \& \forall y(Gy \supset x=y))$
- (2') $\exists x \exists y \exists z (Dx \& Dy \& Dz \& x \neq y \& x \neq z \& y \neq z \& \forall u (Du \supset (u=x \vee u=y \vee u=z)))$
- (3') $\forall x (Dx \supset Gx)$

But (1')–(3') are formally inconsistent.

The modal problem of the Incarnation concerns the apparent impossibility of something being God and a human. It seems that:

- (4) Every God is a perfect being.
- (5) No human is a perfect being.¹⁰

⁸E.g., Exodus 3:13–15.

⁹More directly, since the Father is God and a person, it seems some God is a person and so, since there's only one God, it seems God is a person.

¹⁰There are other pairs we could use to set up the problem here: e.g., every God is immutable, but every human changes; every God is impassible, but every human suffers.

The concept of God is that of a perfect being. But it seems no human is a perfect being. The doctrine of the Incarnation, however, implies the following:

(6) The Son is God and a human.

It seems these claims are logically inconsistent. If we formalize (4)–(6) into first-order predicate logic in the standard way, we have the following:

Where we interpret “Gx” as *x is God*, “Hx” as *x is a human*, “Px” as *x is a perfect being*, and “s” as *the Son*,

(4') $\forall x(Gx \supset Px)$

(5') $\sim \exists x(Hx \& Px)$

(6') $(Gs \& Hs)$

But (4')–(6') are formally inconsistent.

What's the solution? Geach's two theses together promise a way out. First, I present the theses and say how they apply to numerical quantifiers and definite descriptions. Secondly, I present the promised solution. Thirdly, I present Cain's application of Geach's theses to the substitutivity of identity and sortal reduplication. Fourthly, I present Cain's theory of the Trinity and Incarnation. Fourthly, I raise problems for Cain's theory specifically and the Geachian theory more generally. Finally, I propose a non-Geachian relative-identity theory that doesn't share those problems.

2. Geach's Theses

Geach proposes two main theses: the sortal relativity of identity and the irreducibility of restricted quantification. I start with an example, which I use to illustrate Geach's theses.

The Cat Paradox

Tibbles, the only cat on the mat, has at least 1,000 hairs— $h_1, h_2, h_3, \dots, h_{1,000}$:

Now let *c* be the largest continuous mass of feline tissue on the mat. Then for any of our 1,000 cat hairs, say h_n , there is a proper part c_n of *c* which contains precisely all of *c* except the hair h_n ; and every such part c_n differs in a describable way both from any other such part, say c_m , and from *c* as a whole. Moreover, fuzzy as the concept cat may be, it is clear that not only is *c* a cat, but also any part c_n is a cat: c_n would clearly be a cat were the hair h_n plucked out, and we cannot reasonably suppose that plucking out a hair generates a cat, so c_n must already have been a cat. So, contrary to our story there was not just one cat called “Tibbles” sitting on the mat; there were at least 1,001 sitting there!¹¹

There are many proposed solutions to the paradox.¹² Geach offers one: “Everything falls into place if we realize that the number of cats on the mat

¹¹Geach, *Reference*, 215.

¹²See Michael Rea, “The Problem of Material Constitution,” *Philosophical Review* 104 (1995), 525–552, for a list of proposed solutions to the problem of material constitution of

is the number of different cats on the mat; and c_{13} , c_{279} , and c are not three different cats, they are one and the same cat. Though none of these 1,001 lumps of feline tissue is the same lump of feline tissue as another, each is the same cat as any other: each of them, then, is a cat, but there is only one cat on the mat, and our original story stands."¹³

The Sortal Relativity of Identity

The sortal relativity of identity says that:

Where " R " and " S " are sortals,

(SRI) It could be that for some x and y , x and y are the same R but different S s.

For example, in the cat paradox, c and c_{13} are the same cat but different lumps of feline tissue. A term " R " is a sortal just if the phrase "same R " has a meaning and " R "'s meaning includes a criterion of identity for R s (e.g., "cat" is a sortal). A criterion of identity for R s gives the conditions under which, for any x and y , x is the same R as y . For example, the criterion of identity for sets is that, for any x and y , x is the same set as y just if they have the same members. In addition, Geach claims that a criterion of identity for R s is the standard by which we judge that the relation *same* R holds.¹⁴

Where " R " is a sortal, a sortal relativized identity predication is any sentence of the form " a is the same R as b " (e.g., " c is the same cat as c_{13} "). The standard analysis of such predications says that a is the same R as b just if a is the same as b and a is an R . For example, c is the same cat as c_{13} just if c is the same as c_{13} and c is a cat. If (SRI) is true, however, the standard analysis is false. Suppose that a and b are the same R but different S s. Then, since a and b are different S s, a is an S . So a is the same S as a . So a has the feature of being the same S as a . But, since a and b are different S s, b lacks this feature. So, by the indiscernibility of identicals, a is not the same as b .¹⁵ So if a and b are the same R but different S s, then a is the same R as b , but a is not the same as b . So if (SRI) is true, the standard analysis of sortal relativized identity predications is false.

The Irreducibility of Restricted Quantification

Where " R " is a sortal, a restricted universal quantification is any sentence of the form "Every R is F ." The unrestricted counterpart is any sentence of the form "Everything is such that if it is an R , then it is F ." A restricted existential quantification is any sentence of the form "Some R is F ." The unrestricted counterpart is any sentence of the form "Something is such

which this paradox is a version.

¹³Geach, *Reference*, 216.

¹⁴See Geach, *Reference*, 63–64, "Replies," 293.

¹⁵The indiscernibility of identicals says that for any x and y , if x is the same as y , then they are indiscernible, i.e., they have the same features.

that it is an R and it is F ." The standard analysis of restricted quantification reduces "Every R is F " to "Everything is such that if it is an R , then it is F ," and "Some R is F " to "Something is such that it is an R and it is F ." The irreducibility of restricted quantification says that restricted quantification is not so reducible:

Where " R " is a sortal,

(IRQ) (a) The claim that every R is F is weaker than the claim that everything is such that if it is an R , then it is F , and (b) the claim that some R is F is stronger than the claim that something is such that it is an R and it is F .

On (IRQ), the claim that everything is such that if it is an R , then it is F , implies that every R is F , but not conversely. For example, Tibbles is the only cat and has each of the 1,000 hairs.¹⁶ So it's true that every cat has each such hair. But c_{13} is a cat and lacks one such hair. So it's false that everything is such that if it is a cat, then it has each such hair. And, on (IRQ), the claim that some R is F implies that something is such that it is an R and it is F , but not conversely. For example, c_{13} is a cat and lacks one such hair. So it's true that something is such that it is a cat and it lacks some such hair. But Tibbles is the only cat and has each such hair. So it's false that some cat lacks some such hair. So if (IRQ) is true, the standard analysis of restricted quantification is false.

If, however, restricted quantification is not so reducible, how are we to understand such quantification? Geach distinguishes names of and for R s.¹⁷ A name of an R is any name that refers to an R . But just as each sortal's meaning includes a criterion of identity, so, Geach believes, each name's meaning also includes a criterion of identity.¹⁸ So a name for an R is any name whose meaning includes a criterion of identity for R s. So every name is a name for something. And every non-empty name for an R is also a name of an R . But not every name of an R is a name for an R . For example, "Tibbles" is a name of and for a cat, but a name of and not for a lump. And "c" is a name of and for a lump, but a name of and not for a cat.

Geach uses the distinction between names of and for R s to provide rules for restricted quantification:

" $F(\text{some } A)$ " is true iff " $F(a)$ " is true for some interpretation of " a " as a name of and for an A .

" $F(\text{any } A)$ " is true iff " $F(a)$ " is true for any interpretation of " a " as a name of and for an A .

¹⁶For simplicity, when I discuss the cat paradox, I often restrict the domain to things on the mat.

¹⁷Geach, *Reference*, 70.

¹⁸Geach, *Reference*, 67–68, "Replies," 287.

... If we delete from the above truth-conditions for " $F(\text{some } A)$ " and " $F(\text{any } A)$ " the restriction to proper names *of* and *for* an A , we obtain truth-conditions for " $\text{For some } x, F(x)$ " and " $\text{For any } x, F(x)$ " respectively.¹⁹

So the rules are as follows:

(REQ) Some R is F iff for some interpretation of " a " as a name of and for an R , a is F .

(RUQ) Every R is F iff for every interpretation of " a " as a name of and for an R , a is F .

Geach's theses affect the analysis of numerical and so of definite predication. I now look at each in turn.

Numerical Quantifiers and Definite Descriptions

Where " R " is a sortal, a numerical quantifier is any phrase of the form "At least n R s (that are P)," "At most n R s (that are P)," or "Exactly n R s (that are P)." And a numerical predication is any sentence that consists of a numerical quantifier followed by a predicate (e.g., "Exactly one cat that is on the mat purrs"). A definite description is any phrase of the form "The R (that is P)." And a definite predication is any sentence that consists of a definite description followed by a predicate (e.g., "The cat that is on the mat purrs").

The standard analysis of numerical and definite predication goes like this:

At least one R is F iff something x is such that x is an R and x is F .²⁰

At least two R s are F iff something x is such that x is an R , x is F , something y is such that y is an R , y is F , and x is not the same as y .

At least three R s are F iff something x is such that x is an R , x is F , something y is such that y is an R , y is F , x is not the same as y , something z is such that z is an R , z is F , x is not the same as z , and y is not the same as z .

And so on.

The rest is easy:

At most n R s are F iff it's false that at least $n+1$ R s are F .

Exactly n R s are F iff at least and at most n R s are F .

The R is F iff exactly one R exists and is F .²¹

¹⁹Geach, *Reference*, 206.

²⁰At least one R that is P is F iff something x is such that x is an R , x is P , and x is F . In each case, to add a restrictive relative clause, add a relevant conjunct.

²¹At least one R exists iff something x is such that x is an R . In each case, to replace the predicate "is F " with the predicate "exists," subtract a relevant conjunct. At most one R exists iff it's false that at least two R s exist. Exactly one R exists iff at least and at most one R exists.

In the standard analysis, we count by identity. If (SRI) is true, however, it could be that we count, not by identity, but by some sortal relativized identity relation.²² For example, if we count by identity, there are at least 1,001 cats. But there is only one cat. So, in this case, we count, not by identity, but by the relation *same cat*. So we should revise the standard analysis at least this much. Replace each identity predicate with a sortal relativized one. If Geach's analysis of restricted quantification is correct, however, this revised analysis isn't enough. For example, c_{13} is a cat and lacks one of the 1,000 hairs. So it's true that something is such that it is a cat and it lacks some such hair. Tibbles, however, is the only cat and has each such hair. So it's false that at least one cat lacks some such hair. So if we apply Geach's analysis of restricted quantification, the analysis of numerical and definite predication goes like this:

At least one R is F iff some $R x$ is such that x is F .²³

At least two R s are F iff some $R x$ is such that x is F , some $R y$ is such that y is F , and x is not the same R as y .

At least three R s are F iff some $R x$ is such that x is F , some $R y$ is such that y is F , x is not the same R as y , some $R z$ is such that z is F , x is not the same R as z , and y is not the same R as z .

And so on.

The analysis of "At most n R s are F s," "Exactly n R s are F ," and "The R is F " is as before. So the analysis of definite predication is the following:

(DD) The R (that is P) is F iff exactly one R (that is P) exists and is F .²⁴

For example, the cat that is on the mat has each of the 1,000 hairs just if exactly one cat that is on the mat exists and has each such hair.

The Solution to the Philosophical Problems

Before I turn to Cain's application, we may now see how Geach's theses provide a solution to the problems raised. Recall that the following claims about the Trinity seem logically inconsistent:

- (1) There is only one God.
- (2) There are only three divine persons.
- (3) Every divine person is God.

If we apply (SRI), however, we may say the following. In the cat paradox, c , c_{13} , and c_{279} are the same cat but different lumps. Though every such

²²See Geach, *Reference*, 63–64, "Replies," 285–286.

²³At least one R that is P is F iff some $R x$ is such that x is P and x is F . Again, in each case, to add a restrictive relative clause, add a relevant conjunct.

²⁴At least one R exists iff some $R x$ is such that x is the same R as x . At least two R s exist iff some $R x$ is such that some $R y$ is such that x is not the same R as y . The rest is as before. See Geach, *Reference*, 119, 150.

lump is a cat, counting by *same cat*, there is only one cat, and counting by *same lump*, there are at least 1,001 lumps. Similarly, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are the same God but different divine persons. Though every divine person is God, counting by *same God*, there is only one God, and counting by *same divine person*, there are only three divine persons.

So where we interpret " $\exists_G x$ " as *some God x is such that*, " $\exists_D x$ " as *some divine person x is such that*, " $\forall_G x$ " as *every God x is such that*, " $\forall_D x$ " as *every divine person x is such that*, " Gx " as *x is God*, " Dx " as *x is a divine person*, " $x=_G y$ " as *x is the same God as y*, and " $x=_D y$ " as *x is the same divine person as y*,

$$(1'') \exists_G x \forall_G y x=_G y$$

$$(2'') \exists_D x \exists_D y \exists_D z (x \neq_D y \& x \neq_D z \& y \neq_D z \& \forall_D u (u=_D x \vee u=_D y \vee u=_D z))$$

$$(3'') \forall_D x Gx$$

And (1'')–(3'') are formally consistent.

Moreover, recall that the following claims about the Incarnation seem inconsistent:

(4) Every God is a perfect being.

(5) No human is a perfect being.

(6) The Son is God and a human.

If we apply (IRQ), however, we may say the following. Every cat has each of the 1,000 hairs, no lump less than maximal by only one such hair has each such hair, and c_{13} is a cat and such a lump. Similarly, every God is a perfect being, no human is a perfect being, and the Son is God and a human.

So where we interpret " $\forall_G x$ " as *every God x is such that*, " $\exists_H x$ " as *some human x is such that*, " Gx " as *x is God*, " Hx " as *x is a human*, " Px " as *x is a perfect being*, and " s " as *the Son*,

$$(4'') \forall_G x Px$$

$$(5'') \sim \exists_H x Px$$

$$(6'') (Gs \& Hs)$$

And (4'')–(6'') are formally consistent.

3. Cain's Application of Geach's Theses

Cain applies Geach's theses to come up with a substitutivity principle and a reduplication analysis, each of which is part of his theory. We now look at each in turn.

Substitutivity and Indiscernibility

David Wiggins challenges relative-identity theorists to provide substitutivity of sortal relativized identity principles to explain the validity of

certain inferences that use such identity predicates.²⁵ Cain tries to meet this challenge. I shall not, though, present his principle. If I did, I would have to introduce the technical concept of an extensional context. It is far easier to present the corresponding indiscernibility of sortal relativized identity principle, which doesn't use the concept of such a context. We lose nothing and gain much by way of ease of exposition. So the corresponding indiscernibility principle says:

Where "*R*" is a sortal,

(II) For any *R* *x* and any *R* *y*, if *x* is the same *R* as *y*, then they are indiscernible.

For example, where "*Hesperus*" and "*Phosphorus*" are names for planets, the argument "*Phosphorus* is the same planet as *Hesperus*; *Phosphorus* has the feature of appearing in the morning; so *Hesperus* appears in the morning" is valid. But, where "*Tibbles*" is a name for a cat and "*c₁₃*" is a name for a lump, the argument "*Tibbles* is the same cat as *c₁₃*; *Tibbles* has the feature of having the hair *h₁₃*; so *c₁₃* has *h₁₃*" is invalid.

Sortal and Nominal Reduplication

Where "*R*" is a sortal, a sortal reduplication is any sentence of the form "*As an R, a is F*" (e.g., "*As a cat, c₁₃ has the hair h₁₃*"). And where "*b_R*" is a name for an *R*, a nominal reduplication is any sentence of the form "*As b_R, a is F*" (e.g., "*As Tibbles, c₁₃ has the hair h₁₃*").

Recall that the modal problem of the Incarnation concerns the apparent impossibility of something being God and a human. And recall that the following claims about the Incarnation seem inconsistent:

- (4) Every God is a perfect being.
- (5) No human is a perfect being.
- (6) The Son is God and a human.

The council of Chalcedon suggests another way to solve this problem, one that uses reduplication. The council says that the Son is "begotten before the ages from the Father as regards his divinity, and in the last days, the same for us and our salvation from Mary, the virgin God-bearer, as regards his humanity."²⁶ A natural way to read this is that the Son is begotten from the Father atemporally as God, but from Mary temporally as a human. This seems to imply that the Son is atemporal as God, but temporal as a human. Nothing, of course, is both temporal and atemporal.

²⁵David Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), 37–42.

²⁶"Definition of Faith," in Tanner, *Decrees*, 86. Moreover, Cyril of Alexandria and Pope Leo, in letters that Chalcedon endorses, suggest that the Son is immutable, impassible, and immortal as God, but changes, suffers, and dies as a human. See "Second Letter of Cyril to Nestorius," 41–42, "Letter of Cyril to John of Antioch," 72–73, and "Letter of Pope Leo to Flavian," 78–80 in Tanner, *Decrees*.

The reduplicative strategy, however, says that not every claim of the form "as an R , a is F " implies a claim of the form " a is F ."

So perhaps the claim that as God, the Son is atemporal doesn't imply that the Son is atemporal. Or, more plausibly, the claim that as a human, the Son is temporal doesn't imply that the Son is temporal. Either way, we avoid contradiction. If we apply the reduplicative strategy to the modal problem of the Incarnation, we may say the following. Though not everything is such that if it is God, then it is a perfect being, everything is such that if it is God, then, as God, it is a perfect being. Or though something is such that it is a human and it is a perfect being, nothing is such that it is a human and, as a human, it is a perfect being. So even if the Son is a perfect being, as a human, the Son is not a perfect being.

But how are we to understand such reduplication? Cain applies Geach's analysis of restricted quantification to provide an analysis of sortal reduplication:

Where " R " is a sortal,

(SR) As an R , a is F iff some R is the same R as a and is F .²⁷

For example, though c_{13} lacks the hair $h_{13'}$, as a cat, c_{13} has $h_{13'}$ which is true just if some cat is the same cat as c_{13} and has $h_{13'}$. This also suggests an analysis of nominal reduplication:

Where " R " is a sortal and " b_R " is a name for an R ,

(NR) As b_R , a is F iff b_R is the same R as a and is F .

For example, as Tibbles, c_{13} has h_{13} just if Tibbles is the same cat as c_{13} and has h_{13} .

4. Cain's Theory of the Trinity and Incarnation

We now consider Cain's application of Geach's theses to the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation. Cain selects the following sortals, relativized identity predicates, and proper names, and asserts the following theological statements and reduplicatives.

Sortals:

" x is a divine person"

" x is God"

" x is a human"

Relativized Identity Predicates:

" x is the same divine person as y "

" x is the same God as y "

" x is the same human as y "

²⁷Cain, "Doctrine of the Trinity," 147–148.

Proper Names:

"The Father," "the Son," and "the Spirit" are names for divine persons.

"Jesus" is a name for a human.

"Christ" is a name for a divine person and for a human.

Theological Statements:

(7) Each of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit is a divine person and God.

(8) Each of the Son, Jesus, and Christ is a divine person, God, and a human.²⁸

(9) Each of the Father and the Spirit is not a human.

(10) The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are the same God but different divine persons.

(11) The Son, Jesus, and Christ are the same divine person, God, and human.²⁹

Theological Reduplicatives:

"As God, God is F" is equivalent to "God is F."

"As a divine person, the Son is F" is equivalent to "the Son is F."

"As the Son, the Son is F" is equivalent to "the Son is F."

"As a human, Jesus is F" is equivalent to "Jesus is F."

"As Jesus, Jesus is F" is equivalent to "Jesus is F."

If God is impassible and if some God is the same God as the Son, then, by (SR), as God, the Son is impassible. If the Son is begotten and if some divine person is the same divine person as Jesus, then, by (SR), as a divine person, Jesus is begotten. If the Son is begotten and if the Son is the same divine person as Jesus, then, by (NR), as the Son, Jesus is begotten. If Jesus suffers and if some human is the same human as the Son, then, by (SR), as a human, the Son suffers. And if Jesus suffers and if Jesus is the same human as the Son, then, by (NR), as Jesus, the Son suffers.

Obviously, God is God, but is God also a divine person or a human? I return to this in the next section. I now argue that Cain's theory faces problems in two areas: those of theological and Christological predication.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 142, 144–145, 147–152.

²⁹(SRI) says that, where "R" and "S" are sortals, it could be that for some x and y, x and y are the same R but different Ss. A weaker version of (SRI) says that, where "R" is a sortal, it could be that for some x and y, x and y are the same R but discernible. Suppose that the Son and Jesus are the same divine person but discernible. Then the weaker version applies to the doctrine of the Incarnation. And this is how (a version of) (SRI) applies to the doctrine of the Incarnation.

Theological Predication

A theological predication is any sentence of the form "God is F" (e.g., "God is eternal"). Cain argues that, though one can formalize "God exists" as "something is God and is the same God as anything that is God," one can't formalize "God is F" as "something is God, is the same God as anything that is God, and is F."³⁰ If one does, then the claim that Jesus is God and suffers implies that God suffers *simpliciter*. Moreover, if this is so, then the claim that the Father is God and doesn't suffer implies that God also doesn't suffer *simpliciter* and so, since Jesus is God and suffers and the Father is God and doesn't suffer, God suffers and God doesn't suffer. Cain takes these two results as a reason to revise the above analysis of theological predication. So, instead, Cain suggests the following:

(G) God is F iff some God is the same God as anything that is God and is F.³¹

By (REQ), some God is the same God as anything that is God and is F just if for some interpretation of " a_G " as a name for God, a_G is the same God as anything that is God and is F. Since "Jesus" is not a name for God, the claim that Jesus is God and suffers doesn't formally imply that God suffers. Moreover, since "the Father" is not a name for God, the claim that the Father is God and doesn't suffer doesn't formally imply that God doesn't suffer either.

There are two basic results that Cain's analysis of theological predication yields. The first is that if God is F, it's false that God is not-F. For example, if God is eternal, it's false that God is non-eternal. Here's a proof. Suppose, for *reductio*, that God is F, and God is not-F. Then, by (G), some God is the same God as anything that is God and is F, and some God is the same God as anything that is God and is not-F. So, by (REQ), for some interpretation of " a_G " as a name for God, a_G is the same God as anything that is God and is F, and, for some interpretation of " b_G " as a name for God, b_G is the same God as anything that is God and is not-F. So " a_G " and " b_G " are names for God, a_G is the same God as b_G , and a_G is F. So, by (II), b_G is F. So b_G is F and b_G is not-F, which is a contradiction. So if God is F, it's false that God is not-F. So if God is begotten, it's false that God is unbegotten. And if God is incarnate, it's false that God is non-incarnate. We can't speak truly of begotten and unbegotten deity, or of incarnate and non-incarnate deity. We must choose. The least arbitrary option is to deny the positive and assert the negative predicates. Moreover, if God is begotten and so it's false that God is unbegotten, then, not only, as God, is the Son begotten, but also, as God, the Father is begotten, which is false. So, though the Father begets, the Son is begotten, and the Spirit proceeds, God neither begets, nor is begotten, nor proceeds. Furthermore, if God is incarnate and so it's

³⁰Cain, "Doctrine of the Trinity," 142–144.

³¹This is equivalent to an instance of (DD): God is F iff exactly one God exists and is F.

false that God is non-incarnate, then, not only, as God, is the Son incarnate, but also, as God, the Father is incarnate, which is also false. So, though the Son is incarnate, God is non-incarnate. And for similar reasons, on Cain's analysis, God is not a human.

The second basic result is that, where " R " is a sortal, if God is the same R as a , and if God is the same R as b , then a is the same R as b . For example, if God is the same God as the Father, and if God is the same God as the Son, then the Father is the same God as the Son. Here's a proof. Suppose that God is the same R as a , and God is the same R as b . Then, by (G), some God is the same God as anything that is God and is the same R as a , and some God is the same God as anything that is God and is the same R as b . So, by (REQ), for some interpretation of " c_G " as a name for God, c_G is the same God as anything that is God and is the same R as a , and, for some interpretation of " d_G " as a name for God, d_G is the same God as anything that is God and is the same R as b . So " c_G " and " d_G " are names for God, c_G is the same God as d_G , and d_G is the same R as b . So, by (II), c_G is the same R as b . So c_G is the same R as a , and c_G is the same R as b . So, by the symmetry and transitivity of *same R*, a is the same R as b .³² So if God is the same divine person as the Father, and if God is the same divine person as the Son, then the Father is the same divine person as the Son.

These results raise three problems: they imply that God is not a person, the Son is not God from God, and God is not born. Suppose, for *reductio*, God is a person. There are four options. The first option is that God is the same person as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, in which case the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are the same person, which is false. The second option is that God is the same person as only some pair of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, in which case some pair of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are the same person, which is again false. The third option is that God is the same person as neither the Father nor the Son nor the Spirit, in which case there are at least four persons who are divine, which is once again false. The fourth option is that God is the same person as only one of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Perhaps there is reason to say that God is the same person as only the Father because the Father is the origin of the other divine persons: the Father generates the Son and spirates the Spirit. In this case, one might think that something makes the Father more qualified to be the same person as God. But if the Father is more qualified than the Son, then he has a higher status than the Son and so the Son is subordinate to the Father in status, which implies the Arian heresy. If, however, we deny that the Father has such status, then there is no more reason to say that God is the same person as only the Father than there is to say that God is the same person as only the Son or the Spirit. Any choice here is unprincipled. Moreover, if God is the same person as only the Father, then, not only, as God, is the Father the same person as the

³²A relation R is symmetric iff for any x and y , if x stands R to y , y stands R to x , and transitive iff for any x , y , and z , if x stands R to y , and if y stands R to z , x stands R to z .

Father, but also, as God, the Son is the same person as the Father, which is false. So none of the four options works. So God is not a person. But, as we saw above, it seems a theoretical disadvantage for any theory of the Trinity or Incarnation to imply that God is not a person.

Both basic results presuppose (REQ), (G), and (II). We rightly assume that we should analyse "God" as a definite description, i.e., "the God." And there's no problem, in any case, with (G) as such. Rather, it's the way we use (REQ) to interpret (G) that creates difficulty. But if we reject (REQ), then we abandon any application of Geach's analysis of restricted quantification to that of theological predication. That leaves the indiscernibility principle (II). One might think that we can avoid the problem that God is not a person if we simply deny (II). And if we do this, we can indeed say that God is the same person as the Father and God is the same person as the Son, and this won't now formally imply that the Father is the same person as the Son. For some name for God "Alpha," Alpha is the same person as the Father. And for some name for God "Beta," Beta is the same person as the Son. Since there's only one God, Alpha and Beta are the same God. Since, however, we are denying (II), these claims won't now formally imply that Alpha and Beta are indiscernible. But if Alpha is the same divine person as the Father, what else is true of Alpha? Does Alpha beget? And what of Beta, who is the same person as the Son? Is Beta begotten, incarnate, or a human?

The least arbitrary way to develop this idea is as follows. For every name of God " a ," there is a corresponding name for God " b_G " such that a and b_G are indiscernible. For example, "the Father" is a name of God, "Alpha" is the corresponding name for God, and so the Father and Alpha are indiscernible. This idea, however, raises a problem. It leads to the exact same results the avoidance of which motivates Cain's analysis of theological predication in the first place. Suppose this idea is right. Since "Jesus" is a name of God and Jesus suffers, God suffers. And since "the Father" is a name of God and the Father doesn't suffer, God also doesn't suffer. More importantly, this idea leads to the results the avoidance of which motivates Geach's analysis of restricted quantification. Again, suppose this idea is right. In the cat paradox, since " c_{13} " is a name of a cat and c_{13} lacks hair h_{13} , the cat lacks h_{13} , which is false. And since " c " is a name of a cat and c has h_{13} , the cat has h_{13} . So we have a dilemma. Either God is not a person, or we abandon any application of Geach's analysis of restricted quantification to that of theological predication. But again, as we saw above, it seems a theoretical disadvantage for any theory of the Trinity or Incarnation to imply that God is not a person. So it seems we should abandon the application.

That's the first problem. But there are two more: the basic results imply that the Son is not God from God and God is not born. If the Son is God from God, then the Son is from God, and so the Son is begotten by God, and so God begets the Son, and so God begets. But, as shown above, on Cain's theory, God doesn't beget. So, on Cain's theory, the Son is not God

from God. The first council of Nicaea, however, says that the Son is "God from God."³³ Perhaps we should say that, though God doesn't beget, God begets as a divine person. In general, though, where "*R*" and "*S*" are sortals, something is true of the *R* as an *S* only if the *R* is an *S*. For example, something is true of the cat as a lump only if the cat is a lump. Since, on Cain's theory, God is not a divine person, nothing is true of God as a divine person. Moreover, if the Son is God from God, then God is from God. But, on Cain's theory, even if God does beget, it's false that God is from God because the relation of *being from* is irreflexive.³⁴ Suppose, for *reductio*, that God is from God. Then, by (G), some God is from some God. So, by (REQ), for some interpretations of "*a_G*" and "*b_G*" as names for God, *a_G* is from *b_G*. So, by (II), *a_G* is from *a_G*. But, by irreflexivity, *a_G* is not from *a_G*. So, on Cain's theory, though the Son is from the Father, it's false that God is from God.

Thirdly, if Mary is the God-bearer, then Mary bears God, so God is born from her, and so God is born. But if, on Cain's theory, God is non-incarnate and non-human, then, for similar reasons, God is not born. So, on Cain's theory, Mary is not God-bearer. The council of Chalcedon, however, says that the Son is "from Mary, the virgin God-bearer, as regards his humanity."³⁵ Perhaps we should say that, though God isn't born, God is born as a human. But since, on Cain's theory, God is not a human, nothing is true of God as a human.

Christological Predication

The second area in which Cain's theory faces problems is that of Christological predication. A Christological predication is any sentence of the form "Christ is *F*" (e.g., "Christ is God"). Cain assumes that the Son and Jesus are discernible. For example, Jesus but not the Son suffers. This assumption motivates his analysis of Christological predication. Cain's proposal has two parts. First, "Christ" is a name for a divine person and for a human.³⁶ Secondly, though everything true of the Son and Jesus is also true of Christ, everything true of the Son, but not Jesus, is true of Christ only as a divine person, and everything true of Jesus, but not the Son, is true of Christ only as a human.³⁷ Let's look at each part in turn.

First, Cain proposes that "Christ" is a name for a divine person and for a human. This, however, raises a problem. By (II), since "the Son" and "Christ" are both names for divine persons, and since the Son is the same divine person as Christ, the Son and Christ are indiscernible. And, by (II), since "Jesus" and "Christ" are both names for humans, and since Jesus is the same human as Christ, Jesus and Christ are indiscernible. From these, it follows that the Son and Jesus are indiscernible, contrary to Cain's

³³Tanner, *Decrees*, 5.

³⁴A relation *R* is irreflexive iff for any *x*, *x* doesn't stand *R* to *x*.

³⁵Tanner, *Decrees*, 86.

³⁶Cain, "Doctrine of the Trinity," 150.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 149–150.

assumption that the Son and Jesus are discernible. There is a general problem here. Suppose "Christ" is a name. There are two options. First, it is a name for a divine person and for a human. In that case, by (II), the Son and Jesus are indiscernible. Secondly, "Christ" is a name only for a divine person or only for a human. But either choice is unprincipled. There is no more reason to say one than the other. So if we accept (II), and if we assume that the Son and Jesus are discernible, we must deny that "Christ" is a name.

Secondly, Cain proposes that, though everything true of the Son and Jesus is also true of Christ, everything true of the Son, but not Jesus, is true of Christ only as a divine person, and everything true of Jesus, but not the Son, is true of Christ only as a human. This, however, raises another problem. Suppose that Jesus, but not the Son, suffers. Then, though as a human, Christ suffers, and, as a divine person, Christ doesn't suffer, it follows that Christ neither suffers nor doesn't suffer, which is impossible. The law of excluded middle says that for any proposition P , either P is true or not- P is true. This law is self-evident. The corresponding law that concerns objects and features says that for any object a and feature F , either a has F or a lacks F . This law is also self-evident, but Cain's proposal violates it. There is also a general problem here. Again, suppose "Christ" is a name. There are three options. First, everything true of either the Son or Jesus is also true of Christ, and otherwise not. In this case, since Jesus, but not the Son, suffers, Christ both suffers and doesn't suffer, which is impossible. Secondly, everything true of both the Son and Jesus is also true of Christ, and otherwise not. In this case, since Jesus, but not the Son, suffers, Christ neither suffers nor doesn't suffer, which is also impossible. Thirdly, everything true of the Son is true of Christ, and otherwise not, or else everything true of Jesus is true of Christ, and otherwise not. But, again, either choice is unprincipled. So if we assume that the Son and Jesus are discernible, we must again deny that "Christ" is a name.

If "Christ" is not a name, perhaps it's a definite description: "the Christ." In this case, perhaps the term "a Christ" means a divine person who is the same divine person as the Son and Jesus. This, however, implies that the Son and Christ are indiscernible, which, as we saw before, is unprincipled. Abbreviate the predicate "is the same divine person as the Son and Jesus" by "is G." Suppose, for *reductio*, that the divine person who is G and the Son are discernible. Then, for some feature F , the divine person who is G is F and the Son is not- F . By (DD), some divine person who is G is the same divine person as every divine person who is G and is F . So some divine person who is G is F . Unpacking the abbreviation, some divine person who is the same divine person as the Son and Jesus is F . So some divine person who is the same divine person as the Son is F . By (REQ), for some interpretation of a name for a divine person " a_D ," a_D who is the same divine person as the Son is F . So, by (II), the Son is F . So Christ and the Son are indiscernible. Similar considerations apply to the suggestion that "a Christ" means a human who is the same human as Jesus and the Son.

This would imply that Jesus and Christ are indiscernible, which, again as we saw before, is unprincipled. Indeed, any choice of definite description here must use the sortal "divine person" or "human" and so lead to the same result. So, on Cain's theory, "Christ" is not a definite description either. On Cain's analysis of Christological predication, "Christ" is neither a name nor a definite description. But it seems "Christ" is a name or a definite description. So it seems Cain's analysis of Christological predication is false.

5. A Non-Geachian Relative-Identity Theory

I now propose a non-Geachian relative-identity theory closely related to Cain's own. We keep the same sortals, relativized identity predicates, proper names (except the name "Christ"), and theological statements. We also keep the distinction between names of and for *Rs*. This distinction, on its own, doesn't imply the irreducibility of restricted quantification. We must, however, revise the analysis of numerical predication, the indiscernibility principle, sortal reduplication, and theological and Christological predication.

First, we return to the initial revision of the standard analysis of numerical predication:

Where "*R*" is a sortal,

At least one *R* is *F* iff something *x* is such that *x* is an *R* and *x* is *F*.

At least two *Rs* are *F* iff something *x* is such that *x* is an *R*, *x* is *F*, something *y* is such that *y* is an *R*, *y* is *F*, and *x* is not the same *R* as *y*.

At least three *Rs* are *F* iff something *x* is such that *x* is an *R*, *x* is *F*, something *y* is such that *y* is an *R*, *y* is *F*, *x* is not the same *R* as *y*, something *z* is such that *z* is an *R*, *z* is *F*, *x* is not the same *R* as *z*, and *y* is not the same *R* as *z*.

And the rest is the same as before.

Secondly, I propose, using the concept of a name for an *R*, the following indiscernibility principle:

Where "*R*" is a sortal,

(II') For any interpretation of "*a_R*" and "*b_R*" as names for *Rs*, if *a_R* is the same *R* as *b_R*, then they are indiscernible.

Thirdly, I propose, again using the concept of a name for an *R*, the following analysis of sortal reduplication:

Where "*R*" is a sortal,

(SR') As an *R*, *a* is *F* iff for some interpretation of "*b_R*" as a name for an *R*, *b_R* is the same *R* as *a* and is *F*.

Fourthly, in light of all this, I also propose the following analyses of theological and Christological predication:

(G') God is F iff something is God, is the same God as anything that is God, and is F.³⁸

(C) Christ is F iff something is the same divine person as the Son and Jesus, is the same divine person as anything that is the same divine person as the Son and Jesus, and is F.³⁹

On (G'), everything true of any divine person is true of God. So God is a divine person and God is a human. God begets, God is begotten, and God proceeds. And God is incarnate. But, though God is a divine person and God is a human, on (SR'), we still have the result that, as God, God is not a divine person and, as God, God is not a human. And, though God is begotten and incarnate, on (SR'), we still have the result that, as God, God is neither begotten nor incarnate. Now, however, since God is a divine person, on (SR'), we have the result that, as a divine person, God begets and, as a divine person, God is begotten. And now, since God is a human, on (SR'), we have the result that, as a human, God is born.

On (G'), we lack the two basic results of the Geachian theory: if God is F, it doesn't follow that it's false that God is not-F; and if God is the same R as a, and if God is the same R as b, it doesn't follow that a is the same R as b. Since the Son is God and begotten, and since the Father is God and unbegotten, God is begotten and God is unbegotten. But it's false that God is both begotten and unbegotten. And since the Son is incarnate and the Father is non-incarnate, God is incarnate and God is non-incarnate. But, again, it's false that God is both incarnate and non-incarnate. One might object that to say God is non-incarnate seems false. One might reply, however, that to say God is non-incarnate is true but misleading because, though the claim is true, in many ordinary contexts, one would reasonably take the speaker to convey the claim that it's false that God is incarnate, which is false.⁴⁰ Moreover, since the Father is God and is the same divine person as the Father, and since the Son is God and is the same divine person as the Son, God is the same divine person as the Father and God is the same divine person as the Son. But it's false that the Father is the same divine person as the Son.

We also avoid, on (G'), the three problems the Geachian theory faces. First, since each divine person is God and a person, God is a person.⁴¹ Secondly, since the Son is God, the Father is God, and the Son is from the

³⁸Cf. van Inwagen, *God, Knowledge*, 251; Brower and Rea, "Material Constitution," 69.

³⁹Cf. van Inwagen, *God, Knowledge*, 274.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 256.

⁴¹Rea, "The Trinity," claims that x is a god $\equiv_{df}$ x is a divine substance (407), that the divine nature is not a fourth person, but the divine nature is a substance (420). If the divine nature is God but a non-person, then God is a person, God is a non-person, but it's false that God is both a person and a non-person.

Father, God is from God. But it's false that God is from himself. Thirdly, since Jesus is God and Jesus is born, God is born.

So, on (G'), God is a person. If, however, God is a person, one might well ask: which person is God?⁴² In short, the answer is: each of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Since the Father is God and is the same person as the Father, God is the same person as the Father. And the same goes for the Son and the Spirit. But it's false that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are the same person.

On (C), the word "Christ" is not a name but a definite description: the divine person who is the same divine person as the Son and Jesus. On (C), everything true of the Son or Jesus is true of Christ. And so we avoid the problems the Geachian theory faces. Suppose Jesus, but not the Son, suffers. Jesus is the same divine person as the Son and Jesus. And Jesus suffers. So Christ suffers. Moreover, the Son is the same divine person as the Son and Jesus. And the Son doesn't suffer. So Christ doesn't suffer. But it's false that Christ both suffers and doesn't suffer.

Finally, if for some interpretation of " a_G " as a name for God, a_G is the same God as Christ and a_G is impossible, then, by (SR'), as God, Christ is impossible. If for some interpretation of " a_D " as a name for a divine person, a_D is the same divine person as Christ and a_D is begotten, then, by (SR'), as a divine person, Christ is begotten. And if for some interpretation of " a_H " as a name for a human, a_H is the same human as Christ and a_H suffers, then, by (SR'), as a human, Christ suffers. Since "the Son" is a name for a divine person, and since the Son is the same divine person as anything that is the same divine person as Christ, by (II'), "as a divine person, Christ is F" is equivalent to "the Son is F." And since "Jesus" is a name for a human, and since Jesus is the same human as anything that is the same human as Christ, by (II'), "as a human, Christ is F" is equivalent to "Jesus is F." These are the right results. And not only that, this analysis of reduplicatives also provides, as shown above, a solution to the modal problem of the Incarnation.

6. Conclusion

Geach's theses solve the logical problem of the Trinity and the modal problem of the Incarnation. Cain's theory, however, which most plausibly applies those theses to the doctrines, faces problems in two areas. First, as to theological predication, the theory implies that God is not a person, the Son is not God from God, and God is not born. Secondly, as to Christological predication, the theory assumes that the Son and Jesus are discernible but implies that they are indiscernible and that, for some feature F, Christ is neither F nor not-F. Since the Geachian theory implies these things, it seems we should reject any such theory. The non-Geachian theory I proposed also solves the logical problem of the Trinity and the modal problem of the Incarnation, but lacks the implications of the Ge-

⁴²I owe this question to an anonymous referee.

chian theory. Of course, any non-Geachian theory, when fully articulated, may face its own problems and, on balance, the Geachian theory may be better. But we've made a start in the evaluation of relative-identity theories by showing that, in these respects at least, the Geachian theory faces significant theoretical disadvantages compared to the proposed non-Geachian alternative.⁴³

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⁴³I presented the paper at the Tyndale Fellowship Philosophy of Religion Study Group. My thanks to Tom Flint and two anonymous referees for helpful comments.