

A Revolutionary Atonement

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Article: This article focuses on providing an elucidation of a particular conception of the Christian doctrine of the atonement. The specific account of the atonement that is at the centre of the analysis of this article is that of the Revolution Account, proposed by N.T. Wright. This account faces the Explanatory Gap Problem, which highlights the need for one to further explicate its inner workings. This end will thus be achieved by utilising certain theses from contemporary metaphysics, philosophical theology and ethics, which will provide a more robust construal of the Revolution Account in a manner that allows the Explanatory Gap Problem to be successfully dealt with.

Keywords: Revolution, Atonement, Crucifixion, Incarnation, Exemplar

1. Introduction

According to N.T. Wright (2016), reflecting on the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth from the perspective of the resurrection, one can see that a worldwide revolution was launched. That is, the followers of Jesus of Nazareth (Christ) during the first century believed, as noted by Wright (2016, 169), that something had happened with the death and resurrection of Jesus, “something as a result of which the world was now a different place. A revolution had been launched”. Moreover, as Wright (2016, 156) notes, “by six o’clock on the Friday evening Jesus died, something had changed, and changed radically”. We can thus state this position expressed by Wright (2016), which we can term the “Revolution Account of the Atonement” (hereafter, the “Revolution Account”),¹ succinctly as follows:

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| (1) (Revolution) | Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, a revolutionary change was enacted within the world. |
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¹ The terminology of this account is original to this article.

To further understand the Revolution Account, one must, according to Wright (2016), recognise that the Christian Scriptures narrate a story of God's creation, human purpose and failure, and God's resolution in Christ, centring on a "covenant of vocation". This vocation tasked humanity with being "image bearers" and a "royal priesthood" who reflect, like an "angled mirror", God's love, justice and mercy to creation and reflect creation's praise back to God, thus modelling how to live rightly in relation to God, creation and each other. Within this framework, the issue plaguing humanity is deeper than disobedience but is "idolatry", where humanity, in failing to obey God, empowers evil forces that enslave them and creation, and thus the solution is not punishment but breaking these enslaving forces. Revelation 5:10 illustrates this vocation of being "kings" and "priests" and, as Wright (2016) notes, portrays the ultimate aim of God's rescue work, which is not saving humans from hell to heaven but bringing Heaven and Earth together, restoring humanity's priestly role and renewing their vocation within a renewed world. It is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus that brings God's kingdom to Earth and restores humanity's original vocation, enacting a worldwide revolution. The New Testament authors, as Wright (1992) sees them, built upon the Old Testament as a foundational backdrop for conveying the meaning of the person and work of Jesus, with the Old Testament forming a unified narrative that anticipates a closing arc. As Wright (1992) notes, Abraham is positioned as the solution to humanity's downfall, such that Abraham and his descendants (Israel) inherited Adam and Eve's role, with God electing Abraham and entering into a covenant with Israel to have a special people who live in faithfulness to him, keeping his commandments in the Torah, and being a light to the world. However, unfaithfulness to their covenant would lead to exile, which happened in 597 BC through the Babylonian Empire. Although, as Wright (2016) notes, various remnants eventually returned and began rebuilding, they still lived under foreign occupation and awaited the return of their God. Thus, according to Wright (1992), though some Jews had returned from geographical exile, most believed the theological state of exile had continued since the sixth century B.C., and that they were awaiting a real return from exile.

Now, the underlying issue that led to Israel's exile, and for which Jesus is the solution, is "sin", which, according to Wright (2016), is predominantly characterised by idolatry. The Greek term "hamartia" means "missing the mark", representing, in the broader scriptural narrative, a deviation not just from God's moral standards but from humanity's intended role as God's image-bearers. Sin, rooted in idolatry, results from worshipping anything other than the true God, projecting a corrupted image into the world, and extends beyond individual failings to encompass cosmic forces of evil that distort God's creation and hold it in bondage to corruption and death, with "the Satan" (or "the Accuser" in

Hebrew) being closely linked with this. Hence, there is a “spiritual dimension” that includes certain entities (the “evil forces”) analogous to our physical dimension. Within this perspective, all humans, through forsaking their vocation as image bearers, can become bound to sin and spiritually darkened, enabling idols to gain control over creation. Thus, idolatry is equated with a love for death, as humans are designed for life from God alone.

On this basis, the Israelites’ idolatry and sin led to exile, a form of death from which they needed rescue. As Wright (2016) notes, the solution involved not only forgiveness but also liberation from their captors, signifying a return of God’s presence among them. The Scripture’s overarching narrative includes the theme of God’s presence, from Adam and Eve’s interaction with God, through the cloud and fire in the wilderness and the Ark of the Covenant, to Jesus, who is presented as the embodiment of Israel’s God, bringing closure to Israel’s story. His birth, death, resurrection and ascension fulfil the Old Testament’s law and prophets (as Wright (2016) notes, in Romans 10:4, Paul’s use of “end” (Greek “telos”) signifies “culmination” more than “termination”). God’s actions in Israel’s history, specifically the Exodus, demonstrated his sovereign rule; while the Exodus did not involve the forgiveness of sin, the return from exile did. During Jesus’ time, the expectation was for God to act against their oppressors, ending their exile in a new Exodus constituting liberation and forgiveness of sins. This resolution, as Wright (2016) notes, is crucial for understanding atonement and the significance of Jesus’ crucifixion, which centres on the inauguration and restoration of the kingdom of God, with “God is becoming king” being most apt. For the Israelites, according to Wright (2016), the restoration of God’s kingdom realised three hopes: liberation from Roman occupation, the reign of Israel’s God as sovereign ruler, and God’s presence dwelling among His people.

Focusing on the first hope, Israel’s final freedom from pagan rule, as Wright (2016) notes, Israel’s exile was a consequence of their sins, and hence their release required forgiveness, underscoring the transformative event of the cross. As Wright (2016) notes, Jesus truly embodied Israel’s identity as their “representative substitute”, becoming Israel-in-person, and as Jesus was liberated from death through his resurrection, he freed Israel and the world from foreign oppressors. As Wright (1996) notes, God’s rescue is not about escaping the world but defeating the dark powers holding Israel and the world in bondage. Within the gospel narrative, the story of Israel interlocks with the broader theme of darkness and evil tainting God’s good world, as evil, manifested in idolatry and injustice, is a universal affliction. This is seen throughout Jesus’ life, according to Wright (2016), as from his birth, when Herod sought to kill him, through resistance from the Jewish ruling elite and Rome to his teachings on peace and self-sacrifice, which challenged traditional norms, drawing hostility that culminated in his crucifixion. This confluence, as Wright

(2016) notes, demonstrates the convergence of evil forces against Jesus, as according to John 12:31-32, Jesus declared, “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself”. Jesus’ death was thus a triumph over unseen evil forces. As Wright (2016) notes, in Acts 4, the early followers echoed Psalm 2 in acknowledging that rulers conspired against Jesus, and in Luke 22:53, Jesus noted the dominion of darkness during his arrest. This darkness is embodied by the Satan, the “ruler of this world”, destined to be overthrown by Jesus’ death, with John’s Gospel linking Jesus’ death to this ongoing battle and portraying it, as Wright (2016) notes, as a victory of God’s covenant love. The crucifixion is integral to Jesus’ mission, as, attested by John 1:29, Jesus, as the Passover lamb, “takes away the sin of the world”. Jesus’ crucifixion, according to Wright (2016), signifies the end of Israel’s exile, as Jesus bears the nation’s punishment and redefines God’s kingdom through self-sacrificial love. As Israel’s representative, Jesus fulfils the calling to be a light to the Gentiles, extending God’s promises to Abraham to all nations. This is only because Jesus died as Israel’s representative substitute, bearing the world’s sins and facilitating God’s kingdom not through conventional power but through self-giving love, which, as Wright (2016) notes, constitutes a new type of power. Jesus’ sacrifice restores humanity’s original vocation as God’s image bearers and royal stewards, inaugurating a revolution centred on love and reconciliation. This revolution of “self-giving love”, initiated on Good Friday, through Jesus’ humble birth, teachings of peace, and the powerlessness of his death, overturns the powers, completes Israel’s return from exile, the New Exodus, and inaugurates God’s kingdom on Earth, as in heaven.

Now, as compelling as the Revolution Account is, it lacks a substantive explanation of the underlying processes at work. Wright’s (2016) portrayal of the revolutionary significance of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is undermined by his failure to clearly explain its underlying mechanisms, leaving assertions about its transformative effects vague and ambiguous. The account makes grandiose claims about Jesus’ life and death launching a revolution, defeating evil, renewing the covenant and establishing the Kingdom of God, yet one is left questioning “how” these changes are affected. Critical questions remain unanswered, such as why Jesus’ death was necessary for these cosmic changes, and what mechanism leads to forgiveness of sins or the defeat of evil. There thus seems to be an explanatory gap, which let us term the Explanatory Gap Problem (hereafter, EGP). The EGP inflicts the Revolution Account, which vividly portrays the significance of Jesus’ life and death yet falls short of providing a comprehensive explanation of its workings. The central focus of this article will be to address this problem by disambiguating the Revolution Account through the utilisation of certain theses within contemporary metaphysics,

philosophical theology, and ethics. First, there will be a utilisation of a metaphysical framework proposed by Jonathan Lowe (2006, 2008), which I have applied theologically in previous work (Sijuwade, 2023, 2025), providing a helpful elucidation of the Incarnation and establishing a conceptual framework for understanding the person of Christ and a foundation for understanding his revolutionary work—this specific framework I term the ‘Dispositional Incarnation Model’. Second, there will be a utilisation of the concept of “personal presence”, proposed by Eleonore Stump (and in the form of “empathy” by Linda Zagzebski (2023)), and the “Exemplarist theory of ethics” proposed by Zagzebski (2017). Taken together, these will provide a philosophical elucidation of the inner workings of the Revolution Account, ultimately rendering it not only theologically grounded but also philosophically and explanatorily robust, making it accessible to both biblical theology and philosophical theology.

Thus, the plan is as follows. In section 2 (“The Nature of the Transformative Person of Christ”), there will be an explication of Lowe’s ontology and its relationship to the Dispositional Incarnation Model, establishing a conceptual foundation for the central section. In section 3 (“The Nature of the Revolutionary Work of Christ”), there will be an explication of Stump and Zagzebski’s notion of personal presence and Zagzebski’s Exemplarism, providing a philosophical elucidation of the mechanism of revolutionary work established by Jesus’ life and death, and thus the needed explication to help the Revolution Account deal with the EGP. Finally, a concluding section will summarise the results and conclude the article.

2. The Nature of the Transformative Person of Christ

2.1. *The Nature of Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism and the Four-Category Ontology*

In elucidating the nature of the person of Christ that is assumed within the Revolution Account, we can utilise the following two theses that form the first part of the conceptual foundation of the account:

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| (2) (Conceptual Framework (i)) | <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">(i)</div> <div> <p><i>Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism:</i> A person is a simple psychological substance with both mental and physical attributes, distinct yet closely linked to their physical body,</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: flex-start; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;">(ii)</div> <div> <p><i>Four-Category Ontology:</i> There exists four cross-categorical fundamental ontological</p> </div> </div> |
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categories: objects (substances),
modes (property-instances), kinds
(substantial universals) and
attributes (non-substantial
universal).

Focusing our attention first on Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism (hereafter, NCSD), according to Lowe (2008), NCSD is a form of interactionist substance dualism, differentiating between two substances: a person (or self) and a body. A person is described as a simple psychological substance, a conscious entity distinct from but closely tied to its physical counterpart, the body. Substances are objects that persist over time and may change in properties. There are two main types: psychological, which carry mental attributes and follow specific psychological laws, and physical substances, like human bodies and their components. Unlike Cartesian Substance Dualism (CSD), which separates mental and physical properties, NCSD proposes that while a person is primarily a psychological entity, it can also possess physical attributes. This aligns with the intuitive notion that humans occupy space and have distinct physical characteristics. However, the core identity is anchored in experiencing life, emphasising the difference between being a living person and just a biological entity. Thus, in NCSD, while persons undergo cognitive processes such as thoughts and emotions, they also exhibit physical characteristics. This framework presents a person as an experiential subject that's distinct from the body but not entirely detached. Importantly, persons in NCSD are not complex but simple substances, different from their bodies. The relationship between a person and the body is described as "embodiment", somewhat analogous to how a statue relates to its constituent material. This analogy, though not exact, showcases the deep intertwining of two separate entities that share certain properties. Turning our attention now onto the four-category ontology.

The four-category ontology, as noted by Lowe (2006), posits four cross-categorical fundamental ontological categories, which we can understand as follows: firstly, objects or substances are unique entities with distinct properties and identity conditions, and are instances of kinds. Secondly, kinds, or substantial universals, determine the very essence or identity of its members, and are characterised by attributes. Thirdly, attributes, which are non-substantial universals, are universal ways in which entities exist, and are instantiated by modes. Lastly, modes are particular ways an entity exists and characterises objects. Closely related to the notion of an attribute and mode is that of a "power". Powers, within the four-category ontology, enable objects to act and manifest specific actions, and can be distinguished as "token powers" or "power types", each of which is defined by its manifestations and bearers – with powers

being further conceived of as causal/non-causal and active/passive. On the basis of this, a human will is a unique “two-way power”, that is, active, spontaneous, and influenced by rational considerations. For the four ontological categories as a whole, one can see that these categories are grounded on three formal ontological relations: instantiation, characterisation, and exemplification.² For the latter type of relation, exemplification, an important distinction can be drawn between the “dispositional” and “occurrent” exemplification of an attribute, where a given object *dispositionally* exemplifies an attribute by it instantiating a kind, that is, in turn, characterised by an attribute. Conversely, an object *occurrently* exemplifies an attribute by it being characterised by a mode that then, in turn, instantiates an attribute. The four-category ontology is thus a nuanced framework mapping out the interplay and nature of diverse entities, enriched with various dependence and formal ontological relations, that underpin a deep ontology for the natural sciences, as with the theological realm, which will be shown now. That is, with the metaphysical theses of NCSD and the four-category ontology in hand, we can now focus on further elucidating the nature of the person of Christ, as expressed through the Incarnation.

2.2. *An Elucidation of the Transformative Person of Christ*

In utilising the metaphysical theses detailed above, the philosophical model of the Incarnation that will serve as a conceptual framework for the Revolution Account is that of the “Dispositional Incarnation Model”. The Dispositional Incarnation Model (hereafter, the DIM) conceives of the Incarnation, the act of God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, becoming a human as the person of Jesus, as that of him transforming into a human, without, however, ceasing to be divine. We can state the DIM succinctly as follows:

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| (3) (Incarnation) | <p>(iii) At the moment of the Incarnation, GS transformed into a human “person” (i.e. a subject of experience) and became intimately related, through a relation of embodiment, to an organised physical body.</p> <p>(iv) As a human person, GS’s nature had two parts: a complete abstract divine nature, that included a set of non-substantial universals: the d-attributes (that also included within it a divine</p> |
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² For a further explication of the nature of these ontological relations, see Lowe (2006).

concrete will (i.e. an active, non-causal power)), which he dispositionally exemplified, and a complete concrete/abstract human nature, that included a concrete particular that possessed a set of non-substantial universals: the h-attributes (that also included within it a human concrete will (i.e. an active, non-causal power)), that he dispositionally and occurrently exemplified.

In understanding this re-construal of the DIM model further, which I previously introduced into the literature in (Sijuwade, 2023, 2025), GS's Incarnation is that of a transformation into a human "person", that is distinct from his organised physical body—where we can now refer to GS in the transformed state as Christ. In this state, Christ has psychological attributes—both sensory experiences and cognitive states—while connected to a physical entity. Importantly, Christ's mental experiences are not synonymous with his body's physical states. Instead, his cognitive and emotional states belong to him and interact with his body through a unique embodiment relationship. Thus, the DIM differentiates between two substances post-incarnation: Christ, with both physical and psychological properties (and a robust first-person perspective), and his organised physical body, with only physical attributes. Thus, the model ensures that GS does not merely adopt an incomplete human nature. Instead, GS fully becomes a concrete human nature, consistent with NCSD's definition of personhood. Unlike Swinburne and Plantinga's DIM, in the current version of the DIM, GS is not just human based on thinking and acting. GS is considered a concrete human entity: a human person linked to a specific body with essential human psychological and physical attributes. This perspective underscores the transformation GS experiences during the Incarnation, changing from a divine immaterial entity to a human material entity—and thus, there having been a certain gaining and losing of attributes. Significantly, even after this transformation, GS retains his identity, with the only alteration being the type of person he becomes—namely, transitioning from divine to human. An important question can now be raised, however: How can GS lose some attributes in his divine state yet remain divine? This dilemma finds its resolution within the framework provided by the four-category ontology.

Within the framework of the four category ontology, Christ, post-transformation,³ instantiates two kinds: Deity and Humanity. Thus, what members of the kinds Deity and Human *are*—that is, their nature (essence) or the very identity of those members—is determined by them instantiating those specific kinds. In addition to this, Deity and Humanity would also each be characterised by attributes—which we can term *D-attributes* (i.e., Deity-attributes) for Deity, and *H-attributes* for Humanity (i.e., Human-attributes). D-attributes would be the collection of attributes essential for being a deity. And, H-attributes would be a collection of attributes essential for being human—with these attributes, each being essential “features”, “characteristics” or “aspects” of the kind Deity and the kind Humanity. Now, prior to the Incarnation, GS was solely an instance of Deity, and exemplified all of the D-attributes dispositionally—through being an instance of Deity, which is then, in turn, characterised by the D-attributes—and occurrently—through being characterised by “D-modes”, which are, in turn, instances of the D-attributes. However, post-Incarnation, a transformational shift becomes evident: Christ begins to instantiate two kinds: Deity *and* Humanity, and thus exemplifies *both* the D and H-attributes. However, of vital importance here is that of Christ now only *dispositionally* exemplifying the D-attributes post-Incarnation—by being an instance of Deity, which is then, in turn, characterised by the D-attributes—and solely dispositionally *and* occurrently exemplifying the H-attributes—by, for the latter form of exemplification, Christ being characterised by “H-modes”, which are, in turn, instances of the H-attributes. This transformation, however, does not signify an abandonment of GS’s divine nature, as Christ is still an instance of the kind Deity *and* exemplifies the D-attributes—albeit in a dispositional manner. Hence, even in his post-transformation phase, Christ preserves his two natures—by being of two kinds and exemplifying two attributes. However, he has still transformed into a human person by *ceasing* to possess the D-modes—and thus ceasing to exemplify the D-attributes occurrently—and *begins* to possess H-modes—and thus begins to exemplify the H-attributes occurrently. Consequently, Christ, post-Incarnation, is thus related differently to the D-attributes and D-attributes—which are the attributes essential for an object *being* divine or *being* human—through Christ *being* a deity-instance, that is instantiating Deity, and by him being characterised by H-modes (which are particular ways of *being* human). Christ thus *changes* from being a particular object that is dispositionally and occurrently divine to now being a particular object that is, on the one hand, divine and human (i.e. is a deity and human-instance), yet, on the other hand, is solely occurrently a particular human. There

³ I will interchange between the terms “post-transformation” and “post-incarnation” without any change in meaning.

is thus a change in *what* GS (dispositionally) is: divine to divine and human, and a change of *how* GS is (occurrently) characterised: divine to human.

In addition to all of this, Christ, by being a concrete entity (i.e., a human person that is connected to an organised physical body) that exemplifies the D-attributes and H-attributes properties, he would also exemplify a set of powers that reside within each of these sets of attributes. That is, as a will is conceived of within this ontological framework as a power, these attributes would encompass both a human will and a divine will—the human will is a component of the h-attributes, while the divine will is part of the d-attributes. And each will is a unique power differentiated by its manifestation type, its bearer (Christ), and the time it is possessed. Specifically, Christ's human will is defined by its capacity to freely (spontaneously) perform human actions, while its divine will is distinguished by its capability to freely (spontaneously) perform divine actions. Now, the divine will, being part of the D-attributes, is dispositionally exemplified by Christ—which means that it is a characteristic of Deity, which Christ instantiates. In contrast, the human will, from the h-attributes, is occurrently exemplified by Christ—and thus, it is not only a characteristic of Humanity instantiated by Christ but also has direct instances, or H-modes, that characterise Christ. Consequently, Christ possesses two distinct wills: a divine and a human. These wills, being powers (and thus attributes and modes), are concrete and distinct entities that are individually exemplified by Christ.

In summary, the DIM thus conceptualises Jesus as a unique entity possessing dual natures post-incarnation: divine and human. This dualism is characterised by Christ dispositionally retaining divine attributes (D-attributes) while occurrently exemplifying human attributes (H-attributes) and distinctively embodying both a divine and a human will. This approach ensures a full transformation of GS into a human person while maintaining his divine identity within an NCSD and four-category ontological framework. We can now proceed to an elucidation of the revolutionary work of Christ, which will be done by a utilisation of the notion of personal presence and the theory of Exemplarism, as grounded upon the conceptual framework that was developed in this section.

2. The Nature of the Transformative Person of Christ

3.1. The Nature of Personal Presence and Exemplarism

In elucidating the nature of the person of Christ that is assumed within the Revolution Account, we can utilise the following two theses that form the first part of the conceptual foundation of the account:

- (4) (Conceptual Framework (i))
- (v) *Personal Presence*: A person is personally present to another by having a psychological connection that can be grounded upon the cognitive state of empathy.
 - (vi) *Exemplarism*: The meaning of the central concepts of our moral practice is grounded in exemplars of morality, who are conceived of as individuals that are most admirable, and thus are directly referred to and are identified through the operation of the emotion of (reflective) admiration

Focusing our attention first on Personal Presence, according to Stump (2018), an individual can be “present” in a three-fold manner: firstly, at a *place*, through occupying a certain region of space, secondly, at a *time*, through existing at a certain moment of time, and, thirdly, *personally present*, through having a psychological connection with another individual. For the third type of presence, personal presence—which is a presence *with* or *to* another individual—through a direct awareness of another individual—one can begin to understand the nature of this presence better through the notion of “empathy”. At a general level, empathy is the specific cognitive structure in which emotions transfer from one person to another. Importantly, this cognitive structure might be extendable to other psychic states, which suggests a way for omniscience to encompass a direct understanding of diverse conscious experiences. More fully, empathy, according to Zagzebski (2012),⁴ particularly in humans, is commonly defined as the process of acquiring an emotion similar to that of another individual. While the emotion felt through empathy does not necessarily have to be identical to the original emotion, it should be closely related. Importantly, however, empathy is distinct from mere emotional contagion, which is the passive spread of emotion in groups without conscious consideration of others’ emotional states. In contrast, as Zagzebski (2012) notes, empathy involves actively perceiving and responding to the emotions of others. That is, empathy is characterised by reacting to the perceived feelings of another with similar emotional responses to one’s own. This implies that one should consciously recognise the emotion of

⁴ The synthesis of Stump and Zagzebski’s positions—namely, Stump’s notion of personal presence, and Zagzebski’s conception of (divine) empathy—is original to this article.

another and perceive it as a reason for experiencing a similar emotion themselves.

For example, suppose someone named X observes a colleague, Y, who is visibly upset after receiving bad news. X might also feel upset upon seeing this. However, it only counts as empathy if X perceives Y's upset as a reason for X's own upset, not just the cause. One reason X might empathise with Y could be due to a supportive or friendly relationship with Y. Experiencing similar emotions as Y can deepen their emotional bond. Alternatively, X might aim to grasp Y's feelings to better understand Y's behaviour, even if X does not have any particular fondness for Y. Empathy, in this sense, is a tool for making the emotional states of others understandable. When empathising, X thus assumes Y's perspective, as if taking on X's emotional response in a way that corresponds with Y. This process involves an "imaginative shift," as Zagzebski (2012) describes, where the empathiser adopts the viewpoint of the other person. Empathy differs from simply imagining oneself in another's situation; it's about imagining being that person in their specific circumstances. For instance, empathising with a colleague who is struggling with the loss of a distant father involves comprehending the colleague's specific mix of sadness, frustration, and regret, rather than how one might feel if their own father, with whom they have a close and positive relationship, passed away. Empathy, as Zagzebski (2012) notes, thus involves a dual perspective: while empathising, a person both adopts the emotional state of another and maintains an awareness that it is a simulation—with this dual perspective suggesting that empathetic emotions are not identical to the original emotions, but are rather representational. That is, they begin as imitations but are then shaped by the empathiser's own beliefs and emotions, resulting, as Zagzebski (2012) terms it—in a "congruent" emotion. Importantly, empathising with emotions, as Zagzebski (2012) also notes, necessitates actually having those states—*as a copy of an emotion is still an emotion*. However, a copy of a judgment or choice is not the same as the original. One could empathise with someone's judgment without sharing it or empathise with a choice without making it. The empathetic grief, for example, is the person's projection into her friend's experience, yet she remains aware that it is a simulation, a representation of her friend's actual emotion. Turning our attention now onto the theory of Exemplarism.

Exemplarism, according to Zagzebski (2017), posits that moral concepts are grounded in exemplars of morality, conceived of as individuals who are most admirable and are identified through the process of reflective admiration. This thesis thus diverges from the descriptivist theory, suggesting that, like natural kind terms (Putnam, 1975; Kripke, 1980), moral terms directly refer to their subjects. Exemplarism argues that "good person" and other moral terms refer to individuals admired for their virtues, not through descriptive meanings but

through direct reference. The admiration for these exemplars, based on deep, acquired character traits, forms the foundation of moral judgement and emulation in exemplarism, which underscores the role of narrative and tradition in shaping our understanding of virtue and morality. More fully, in extending the normative framework, Zagzebski (2017) articulates the foundation of exemplarism, a thesis central to understanding moral goodness. This thesis shifts away from a conceptual base, focusing instead on direct reference to moral exemplars, identified through reflective admiration. This is that exemplarism posits that our moral practice's core concepts are rooted in such exemplars, regarded as individuals embodying the highest level of moral admiration. The semantic interpretation of moral terms, as Zagzebski (2017) elaborates, aligns with the direct reference theory for natural kind terms, initially introduced by Putnam (1975) and Kripke (1980). This marks a departure from the previously dominant descriptivist theory, which held that a term's meaning is tied to its mental description. For instance, "nail" might be described as a small metal spike used in construction. However, this descriptivist approach falls short for terms like proper names and natural kind terms such as "water" or "gold". Zagzebski (2017) notes that "water" cannot be confined to descriptions like "colourless, odourless liquid" because something other than H₂O could fit this description. The direct reference theory posits that natural kind terms refer to entities of the same kind as an indexically identified instance. This theory explains how terms like "water" maintain consistent reference, even before and after the discovery of their chemical structure. It allows for successful reference to these kinds by speakers, even without descriptive knowledge of the terms, relying on community experts for correct identification. In the application of this theory to moral terms, Zagzebski (2017) suggests that "good person" does not refer descriptively but rather refers to individuals who exemplify moral goodness. This approach anchors basic moral concepts in particular exemplars of moral goodness. For instance, good persons are those like Mother Teresa or Gandhi, identified not through descriptions but direct reference. This method fixes the term "good person" without relying on descriptive concepts. Further, Zagzebski (2016) highlights that moral exemplars can be identified through the emotion of reflective admiration, an emotion shaped by narrative tradition and experience. This identification process is revisable as more knowledge becomes available, and one may even revise their admiration upon gaining further information. Exemplars are considered standards for moral theorising, systematically linking moral concepts. Exemplarism categorises exemplars into heroes, saints, and sages, each embodying virtues like courage, charity, and wisdom, respectively. Zagzebski (2017) delineates specific definitions for moral concepts, rooted in exemplarism. These include virtues admired in exemplars, good motives and ends associated with exemplars, and admirable lives led by them. The definitions

direct one towards understanding the deeper nature of these concepts beyond surface descriptions.

In summary, exemplarism, as articulated by Zagzebski, grounds moral concepts in the direct reference to morally admirable exemplars, identified through reflective admiration. This approach emphasises the role of narrative and tradition in shaping our understanding of moral goodness and virtue, moving beyond descriptive definitions to a more experiential, community-based understanding of morality. With these two notions in hand, we can now proceed forward to apply them to our elucidation of the revolutionary work of Christ, as posited by the Revolution Account.

3.2. An Elucidation of the Revolutionary Work of Christ

The Revolution Account posits that the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth launched a specific revolution within the world. We can now provide a further elucidation of the nature of this revolution by drawing a distinction between the “individual revolution”—that is, a revolution that took place at the individual (personal) level—and the “global revolution” that took place—that is, a revolution that took place at the global (corporate) level. We can state the first form of revolution posited by the Revolution Account succinctly as follows:

(5) (Individual
Revolution)

Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, a revolutionary change was enacted within the world, at an individual level, by Christ’s totally perfect empathy with all conscious individuals, enabling him to be a representative substitute for the sins of humanity, to defeat all of the evil forces through his death on the cross and be resurrected to enable all humans internally experience the new creation.

In further conceptualising the individual revolution posited by this precisified version of the Revolution Account, one can first understand that, if humans can assume the perspective of others to understand their emotions, then it should also be possible to represent any of their conscious states in a similar empathetic structure.⁵ That is, when one empathises, one acquires the emotions of others. Extending this now, what can be termed as “total empathy” involves representing all aspects of another individual’s consciousness, including beliefs,

⁵ I closely follow Zagzebski (2023) in the application of empathy within a theistic context (which she terms “omnisubjectivity”).

sensations, moods, desires, choices, and emotions. More specifically, the notion of *total* empathy is an expanded form of empathy that includes further conscious states. That is, total empathy is the cognitive state of empathising with every aspect of a person's conscious experience throughout their life—that is, every thought, belief, sensation, mood, desire, and decision, along with every emotion. Hence, *perfect* total empathy is the complete and accurate representation of all of another individual's conscious states. Hence, if X has perfect total empathy with Y, then, whenever Y is in a conscious state C, X acquires a state that is a perfectly accurate copy of C, and X is aware that her conscious state is a copy of C. If an individual has perfect total empathy for another individual in this particular way, then the former individual is able to grasp *what it is like* for the latter individual to be in that specific state. Yet, because the individual is in an empathetic state, their awareness of their individuality will be included in their empathetic state (Zagzebski, 2013). Furthermore, the individual would always have an awareness that their empathetic copy *is a copy*—that their empathetic copy of the individual's state is not the state of being that individual. Given all of this, it is thus plausible to take God (if he exists) to be a *cognitively perfect* being, and thus, one would be a being who has total perfect empathy with *all* conscious beings who have ever existed (or will ever exist). In short, it is a plausible assumption to take God to be an entity that possesses the attribute of being *totally empathetic*—with the nature of this form of empathy being a direct acquaintance with the conscious states of all of God's creatures—a form of like direct seeing, yet without there being any physical difference between God and his creatures. As a totally empathetic being, God thus lives through the conscious experience of each being who possesses consciousness. In other words, God experiences everything we experience by living our life—that is, God grasps it as if it were from their first-person point of view—yet, in an empathetic way, such that God does not “forget” that he is not that individual. Thus, God feels total empathy towards another individual; he shares in the total conscious experience of this individual—as if it was happening to him—without, however, him losing his own identity in this shared experience.

From this conceptual basis, one can now understand that Christ, in having a human nature—that is, in having transformed into a human person through the Incarnation—he will have the ability, like other humans, to be empathetic with other individuals. Yet, in Christ also having a divine nature, he will have access to divine power, and so can have the ability to be empathetic with other human beings in a way that mere humans cannot do so—that is, him being totally empathetic. Moreover, as a divine person would be eternal (i.e., existing without beginning or end) and omnipresent (i.e., being causally active at, and cognizant of, every point of space), and thus would be present at every time and space, Christ can use his human mind, and the power that is available from his

possession of a divine nature to be totally empathetic with the *entire mind of every human being that exists at every time and space*. From the moment of his Incarnation, GS, as Christ, would have a direct acquaintance with the conscious states of all other human beings. As a totally empathetic being, throughout the 28-33 years of his life, Christ would live, in addition to his life, through the conscious experience of each human who possesses consciousness. And thus, Christ would know everything you know or understand from living your life, and similarly, for every other human being—in short, Christ would experience everything by living that individual's life—that is, Christ grasps it as if it were from their first-person point of view—yet, in an empathetic way, such that Christ does not “forget” that he is not that individual. Thus, Christ, during his incarnate life, feels total empathy towards all other individuals—that is, he shares in the total conscious experience of this individual—as if it was happening to him—without, however, him losing his own identity in this shared experience. Christ would thus have perfect total empathy with every human being. One can ask, however, how could Christ, as a human being, have coherently lived his life, and also the life of every other individual?

Understanding how one person, even if possessing a divine nature, could coherently live a human life while also experiencing the totality of human existence is a profound challenge from a human rational perspective. This notion stretches our understanding of consciousness, identity, and the limits of human cognition. In human experience, our sense of self and personal identity is shaped by experiences that are inherently linear and limited. That is, one experiences life sequentially, moment by moment, and one's understanding of the world and others is bounded by their personal experiences and cognitive capacities. One's consciousness is designed to manage and process information in a way that is feasible for human understanding—it is a selective process, focusing on what's immediately relevant and manageable. The complexity of processing and empathetically understanding every human experience simultaneously would be, by human standards, overwhelming. However, by Christ having a divine nature it implies that he has an ability to hold, process, and empathise with an infinite array of experiences across time and space. Hence, this level of consciousness is fundamentally different from human understanding; it's not limited by the sequential and singular nature of human experience. And, this, one can ask again: how can one person, even if possessing a divine nature, coherently live a human life while also experiencing the totality of human cognitive experiences?

We can deal with this issue by now bringing into account the DIM. In this framework, perfect total empathy is seen as one of the d-attributes. Thus, pre-incarnation, God the Son (GS) exemplified this attribute both dispositionally and occurrently as part of his divine nature. However, post-incarnation, as Christ,

this attribute shifts to being dispositionally exemplified. This means that while Christ retains the capacity for perfect total empathy inherent in his divine nature, it is not an active component of his day-to-day conscious experience during his human life. This conceptual approach resolves the apparent paradox of Christ being fully human with cognitive and emotional constraints yet also possessing divine attributes like perfect total empathy. As a human, Christ experiences the limitations and particularities of human life—emotions, physical sensations, and cognitive processes. These human experiences are occurrently exemplified—that is, they are actively present and influence Christ’s conscious experience. At the same time, the divine attribute of perfect total empathy, while not actively experienced or manifested in Christ’s human consciousness, remains an attribute that is possessed by him, by it being dispositionally exemplified by him. In short, it’s an inherent part of Christ’s divine nature, retained in a dispositional form, by him being an instance of the kind Deity, that is characterised by this attribute. This means that while Christ, in his human life, does not constantly experience perfect total empathy in an occurrent, conscious manner, he nonetheless holds this capacity in an indirect, dispositional sense. However, at the crucifixion of Jesus, something important happened. That is, during the life of Christ, up until the point of the crucifixion, Christ dispositionally exemplified the divine attribute of perfect total empathy. This means that while he possessed the capacity for perfect total empathy as part of his divine nature, it was not actively manifest in his day-to-day human experiences. However, the utilisation of the DIM enables one to propose that a significant transitional event occurred at the crucifixion. That is, it is at this moment on the cross that Christ begins to *occurrently exemplify the attribute of perfect total empathy*. This specific occurrent exemplification of perfect total empathy at the crucifixion can be understood as Christ actively experiencing and embodying the full depth of the cognitive experience of all conscious entities—which would include their suffering, pain, evil and separation. Thus, at this moment, Christ is not just empathising with the experiences of all conscious individuals in a general sense—rather, he is actively and wholly experiencing them. Moreover, this transition also signifies an end to the dispositional exemplification of this attribute. As now, the capacity for perfect total empathy that was previously held in a dispositional way has become an occurrent reality. We can now further explicate the nature of this occurrent exemplification of perfect total empathy as follows: on the cross, Christ willingly opens himself up simultaneously to every human mind. And thus, when he does this at that time, Hence, at this time, the mind of Christ is opened to the cognitive states of all human beings—including the times before his birth and after his physical death. And by the mind of Christ being connected to the cognitive states of every other human being, Christ would have in his mind a copy or simulacrum of each of the cognitive states of every individual, such that each and every

individual is personally present within the mind of Christ in the event of his death. This would thus result in two things occurring that are central to our theory: first, in this act, Christ fulfils his role of being the representative for all other human individuals through bearing all the sins and inherent evil of humanity. That is, on the cross, Christ's mind is connected with the cognitive states of every human being—where, at one and the same time, Christ is totally empathetic with the cognitive states that are the source of every atrocious and evil action that humans have ever committed. That is, every vile, appalling, repulsive, evil cognitive state associated with human wickedness is also simultaneously present in the mind of Christ. However, most importantly, Christ possessed in his mind a copy or simulacrum of all the “stains” of all the sinful and evil actions that were performed by humans on the basis of their idolatry.⁶ Thus, by being totally empathetic with all human individuals on the cross—Christ takes on all of the sins (and evil) of the world and thus is the representative substitute who stands in the place of them.

It is here that we must address the normative dimensions of this union, particularly in light of objections regarding the sufficiency of purely psychological models of atonement, such as those which suggest that psychological integration alone fails to address the normative obstacles, such as guilt or the danger of unholiness, that prevent divine-human union. While the utilisation of Stump's account focuses heavily on the psychological integration of the will, the Revolution Account, by situating the atonement within the framework of Covenant and Exile, acknowledges a distinct normative obstacle: the objective status of being in rebellion against the divine vocation. The union between God and humanity is not merely hindered by internal psychological divergence but by the objective, normative barrier of “covenantal failure”, a state of exile that demands a resolution. Christ does not merely heal the human psyche; as the representative substitute, he assumes the normative status of the “exiled one”. By absorbing the consequences of idolatry, he satisfies the normative demand of the Covenant, which stipulates that idolatry leads to death, and thereby removes the objective legal and moral barrier to the divine-human union, thus dealing with the normative obstacle of guilt and the objective status of exile.

The second thing that Christ's state of perfect total empathy would result in is that of all human beings *and* the conscious dark powers—namely, the Satan (and his followers)—being *present with* Christ in his death—through the cognitive states of *all* conscious being present within the mind of Christ at this time,

⁶ The model proposed here builds is similar to that of Stump (2018) but is to be distinguished from it by its focus on the notion of total empathy rather than that of Stump's concept of “mind reading”.

through him being totally empathetic.⁷ And thus, as all of the cognitive states that indwell within the mind of Christ (whilst he is on the cross) are present with him during this event, they are then put to “spiritual” death (in the spiritual dimension) through the “physical” death of Christ (in the physical dimension).⁸ In other words, all humans participate in the death of Christ by them being personally present with him through his perfect total empathy with them. Thus, in participating in the death of Christ, all humans are freed from their bondage to sin and idolatry, as the death of their minds in Christ puts an end to the idolatrous inclinations and the spiritual darkness of their minds—which are both states that are dependent on the functioning of the human mind. Hence, as all of the minds of each and every human and the conscious evil powers spiritually die at the moment that the mind of Christ physically dies, there is an end that has now been given to the production of sin in the life of every human—as, in short, each of these humans has now died through participating (via personal presence) in the death of Christ. And, most importantly, the conscious evil powers are themselves put to death through this action—that is, the Satan is *himself* put to death on the cross with Christ. More fully, the presence of the evil powers at the crucifixion is important because it is through their presence, and Christ’s perfect total empathy with all states of consciousness, including those of evil, that they are brought to their own form of death. Christ’s perfect total empathy means that he fully assumes and experiences not only the sin of humanity but also the full spectrum of conscious experience, including that which is under the domain of evil. Hence, by assuming this onto himself, Christ enacts a paradoxical victory. The powers of evil, being present at the crucifixion, are subject to its outcomes.

However, one must ask: what is the precise mechanism by which this empathetic connection leads to the defeat of these powers? It is not simply that they are present; rather, the mechanism of their defeat lies in the “ontological tethering” that perfect total empathy creates between the light of the divine life and the darkness of the demonic will. By empathising with Satan and his demons, Christ does not merely observe them; he actively encompasses their distorted consciousness within his own perfectly ordered mind. This act serves as a metaphysical trap. These entities, which exist as parasites on creation and negations of the good, are essentially defined by their rejection of the divine presence. By empathising with them, Christ forces an immediate, unshielded proximity between their darkness and the uncreated light of his divinity. By maintaining a perfect cognitive connection with these dark powers, Christ drags them, as it were, into the sphere of his own mortality. Since the influence of these

⁷ And assuming some form of dualism, the individual would be *identical* to the totality of their cognitive states.

⁸ The distinction between dimensions was introduced in the first section of this article. I leave the metaphysics of this “spiritual” death open.

powers over humanity is predicated on their spiritual attachment to, and manipulation of, human idolatry, Christ's act of assuming this idolatrous state via empathy, and then subjecting it to physical and spiritual death, effectively severs their ontological anchor. They are not merely observers of his death; rather, through the metaphysical bond of empathy, they are inextricably bound to the very event that extinguishes the medium of their influence. The death of the "host" consciousness in Christ, which held the simulacra of their evil, thereby dissolves the power they held over the human sphere. Consequently, when Christ enters into death—the ultimate consequence of sin and the realm claimed by these powers—he brings them with him via this empathetic bond. Yet, unlike humans who are sustained by God's grace for redemption, these powers are confronted by the absolute reality of God's self-giving love in the very centre of their own domain (death). Because their existence is predicated on a negation of this love, being empathically held within Christ's consciousness as he surrenders to the Father causes an "ontological exhaustion" of their power. They are brought into contact with the one reality they cannot survive: the presence of God acting in total, self-sacrificial love. Thus, the empathetic bond acts as a conduit not for their redemption, but for their dissolution as ruling principles; as states above, the "parasite" dies because the "host" (Christ's humanity) enters a state of death that is simultaneously saturated with divine life, a combination that is metaphysically caustic to entities composed entirely of malice.

Christ's perfect total empathy and assumption of all sin and evil effectively neutralise the power of Satan. This is because the act of taking on the entirety of evil and fully empathising with it, even to the point of death, exhausts the power of evil. It's an act of absorption and transformation, turning the weapon of death back upon itself and upon the forces that wield it. Hence, at this moment, the crucifixion is not just a sacrifice but also a confrontation—in that Christ's death is the mechanism by which the power of Satan and the bondage of sin are broken. That is, by Christ experiencing death, we are now presented with a means of breaking the bondage to sin that has plagued all humans—which is provided by Christ taking on all the sins of the world (and thus being the representative substitute), and by that of the minds of all humans and conscious evil powers experiencing death—and thus the spiritual bondage that is tied to these minds of the former ceasing to exist as well. We can thus take it to be the case here that, in the death of Christ, there is a confronting and defeat of the enslaving powers that brought about humanity's spiritual darkness and bondage to sin. This is due to the fact that Christ willingly goes into the heart of this darkness (by his crucifixion) and takes upon himself the full weight of these powers—through his perfect total empathy of all conscious individuals on the cross. And, thus, in doing so, Christ exhausts their power and breaks their enslavement—by putting to death the corrupted conscious states of all of humanity and all of the conscious

evil powers (i.e., the Satan)—and thus the victory of the kingdom of God, which was inaugurated during the life of Christ, is now able to be fully realised. Yet, the death of Christ is not the end, given that he is resurrected from the dead by God, which is the action that launches the new creation. That is, the resurrection of Christ is to be seen as the confirmation of this victory, signalling the start of a new reality where the powers of evil have been irrevocably defeated, and the potential for spiritual freedom and new creation is inaugurated. Through Christ's resurrection, the death he experienced is not the final word; instead, it's the beginning of a new order where the previously binding forces of evil no longer hold sway. More fully, by all human beings indwelling within the mind of Christ—by them being personally present through his total perfect empathy with them—*all humans have been put to death in the death of Christ*. That is, as noted previously, the minds of all humans have participated in the death of Christ and thus cease to exist “spiritually” at the time that Christ's mind ceases to exist “physically”. However, as Christ is not only the representative substitute that brings about the New Exodus—through rescuing humanity from their slavery to sin and the evil powers—but is also the means by which God *launches the new creation*—humanity now has the opportunity to experience the new creation, at the *present moment*, at an *internal level*, by receiving a newly created cognitive structure (i.e., psyche) being brought back to life *with* Christ in his resurrection. By this event taking place, all humans are thus able to adopt a new mind and will that is created during his life. More specifically, during the period of his Incarnation, Christ entered as *deeply* as possible into the human life situation of suffering, limitations, dependence, vulnerability and death—and in this situation, he responded to these issues with love, faith and hope. Thus, by Christ performing this action of identification, a *fully human and divine mind and will* were created in Christ—with this mind *not* being spiritually darkened, and this will not be subject to the bondage to sin. In other words, by living a certain type of life, Christ created a *new mind and will* that was wholeheartedly conformed around the good—his intentional states and will were all directed towards the good—and thus, each individual that was personally present with Christ is provided with the opportunity to replace their previously possessed “tainted” mind and will by “partaking” (adopting or sharing) in his. Yet, this mind and will cannot be imposed upon an individual by God, if their libertarian freedom and “personhood” is to be maintained. Thus, an individual must *freely* partake of it by themselves, desiring a mind and will that is directed towards God—a desire that can be elicited in them by the hearing of the Gospel. Nevertheless, through the death of Christ, humans are able to participate in this death and thus cease to possess their sin-inflicted minds and wills. And now, through the resurrection of Christ, humans can now also participate in his life by the mind and will of Christ now, replacing the individual's own mind and will in a manner that the cognitive

states of Christ are, creatively individualised and integrated into each human's mind. And, as the new mind and will created in Christ is radically at odds with the original minds and wills of other humans that are directed towards idolatry, it undercuts it by now providing them with cognitive states that are directed towards God. Therefore, by Christ performing the action of resurrecting from the dead, the new creation is launched within the present by all humans being able to be given a new mind and will in Christ and through his revolutionary work.

Taking all of these things into account, one thus has a means for dealing with the EGP through the concept of Christ's perfect total empathy on the cross, which forms the basis of a revolutionary transformation in human consciousness and the world's moral order. That is, this transformation is rooted in the belief that Christ, in his crucifixion, opened himself to every human mind, thereby experiencing and bearing the full spectrum of human cognitive states, including those of sin and evil. This is that, Christ became a representative substitute for humanity, not only empathising with but also embodying every human's cognitive state. By Christ, through his total perfect empathy, opening himself up to the cognitive states of every human being, past, present, and future, he did not merely sympathise with human suffering and sinfulness—he fully absorbed and experienced it within his own consciousness. Thus, perfect total empathy with humanity goes beyond physical suffering; it includes a spiritual and cognitive bearing of all human sins and the inherent evils caused by idolatry. Thus, in this act, Christ becomes the representative of all humanity, not just in a symbolic sense but in a very real, cognitive, and spiritual manner. As his expression (or "act") of perfect total empathy on the cross meant that Christ experienced the depths of human wickedness and sin, taking upon himself all the "stains" of human actions derived from idolatry. Through this process, Christ did not just empathise with humanity but absorbed the very source of human sinfulness into himself. However, the significance of this perfect total empathy extends beyond the personal suffering of Christ—as it also marks a pivotal moment in the spiritual realm. As Christ embodies the cognitive states of all humanity and the conscious evil powers (including Satan and his followers), their presence in his death signifies their own spiritual demise. This idea suggests that when Christ physically died, the spiritual bondage and corrupted states of consciousness that had ensnared humanity and the dark powers were also put to death. That is, the death of Christ results in a sort of "spiritual death" for all the cognitive states associated with human sin and the conscious dark powers. And it is this "spiritual death" that is crucial as it marks the end of the reign of these dark powers and the bondage of sin over humanity—that is, it is a paradoxical victory where, through his death, Christ defeats the very forces that brought about his crucifixion. The resurrection of Christ is important here, as it is not only a confirmation of victory over death and sin but also marks the beginning of a new

creation. Through resurrection, Christ offers humanity a new cognitive structure—a new mind and will that is free from the corruption of sin and idolatry. This new cognitive structure, perfected in the life and resurrection of Christ, is offered to all humanity as a gift, providing a means to overcome the previously prevailing spiritual darkness. However, it's essential that individuals freely choose to partake in this new creation by aligning their wills and minds with that of Christ. This transformative process, initiated by Christ's perfect total empathy and culminating in his resurrection, is thus the mechanism through which the EGP raised against the Revolution account is addressed. That is, it provides a detailed explanation of how Christ's life, death, and resurrection bring about a revolutionary change in the world. By participating in Christ's death and resurrection, individuals are liberated from their previous bondage to sin and given a new opportunity to live lives directed towards the good. Thus, in addressing the EGP, this approach provides a detailed explanation of how Christ's empathetic act on the cross—and his resurrection—bring about a fundamental change in the spiritual and moral order of the world. It explains the mechanism by which Christ's actions overcome the forces of evil and sin, offering humanity a new way to exist that aligns with the goodness and love of God. That is, Christ's death signifies the defeat and "spiritual death" of the powers of sin and evil that had held humanity in bondage, and this is the essence of the revolution—where there has now been a transition from a world dominated by sin and idolatry to one where humans, through experiencing the release from slavery, which is an act of the forgiveness of sins, the true return from exile, and the New Exodus, are now free to live for God and truly fulfil their vocation.

We have thus now seen how one can understand the nature of the revolution expressed by the Revolution Account, at an individual level. It will be important now, however, to further demonstrate how this can also be understood at a more global level. That is, we can now the life we can now provide a further elucidation of the nature of this revolution succinctly as follows:

- (6) (Global Revolution) Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, a revolutionary change was enacted within the world, at a global level, by Christ living an exemplary life, and expressing certain virtues through his death, humans are able to, through reflective admiration, emulate Christ, and thus become exemplars themselves, which will contribute to spreading goodness around the world and ultimately thus transform the world from a darkened world to a good world.

In further understanding the global revolution proposed by the precisified version of the Revolution Account, one can posit, at a general level, that God would seek to manifest his goodness and bring about other good things. Now, as the creation of conscious entities is plausibly a good thing, God would thus inevitably seek to undertake a creative activity that brings about other conscious entities—amongst the myriads of other entities that God would see that is good to create as well—let’s term this action “creating a world”. Plausibly, part of this creative activity would be that of furthering the good among the created entities by enabling these entities to further the good themselves by living morally good lives—let’s term this action “creating a *good* world”. For this to be the case, it would require the creation and/or promulgation of some system of morality. Now, one way in which God could do this would be by providing a revelation of a total moral law/code and requiring every person to follow it. In creating this type of world, God would forgo the good of giving humans much *responsibility* for what the moral foundation of his creation should be like. That is, a world in which morality was grounded in an overriding moral code—rather than human exemplars of goodness—would be one where humans have only very limited responsibility for our moral development and do not play a creative role in making the world into a “good world”—for example, a world in which there are many admirable persons who, through the imitability of the admirable, further the good that is present in the world by living virtuous lives. A God who gave agents only such limited responsibilities for the type of world we were to live in would not have given much, as God would not only have reserved for himself the all-important action of causing the world to exist but also the all-important choice of the kind of world it was to be—whilst, simply leaving humans with the small task of filling in the details. That is, if great limits were set for the role that humans play in grounding moral concepts, our acquisition of moral knowledge, and our overall moral development—which would be so if God were to provide a total moral law/code—then God would be incapable of granting humans substantial responsibility; rather, he would have only permitted them to engage in a trivial game. However, if God were to create a world in such a way that all of morality is rooted in exemplars of morality—and thus all humans would be given the opportunity to acquire the traits (grounded in the deep cognitive structure) that enable an individual to be an admirable person— then humans would have been given a share in God’s creation—a share in the ability to further the good by living admirable lives that—through one directly referring to them— can be emulated by others. The lives of exemplary people would thus fulfil the role of grounding morality in our world. In this world, direct reference would be made to exemplars of goodness, with the central concepts of our moral practice being defined by this reference, and thus, this world would be able to be made into a “good world” by each and every human individual playing a part in living

an admirable life, which would motivate others (who admire them) to emulate their lives, and thus, because of this, they themselves would also become admirable—which would ultimately manifest the good in the world. By utilising this framework, God would thus allow all humans to *flourish creatively* by participating in his creative role of spreading goodness and grounding morality in the world. That is, humans would be provided with the opportunity to live truly flourishing lives by spreading goodness in our world—and thus, each human fulfilling a creative role that is akin to the role that God fulfils in creating the world. Hence, a good God, like a good father, will delegate this type of responsibility (Swinburne, 2004). And thus, we have reason to believe that God would utilise an exemplarist methodology when it comes to grounding morality, rather than that of grounding it solely (or at all) in a total moral law/code

Given all of this, within this specific context, Jesus can thus be taken to be a supreme moral exemplar—or the exemplar *par excellence*—whose life and death serve as a moral anchor for humanity. According to the thesis of exemplarism, moral concepts are grounded not in abstract laws but in the concrete lives of those we admire for their virtues. Jesus, in his life and death, perfectly manifested the virtues necessary to be a moral exemplar. That is, Christ's life, as depicted in the Christian narrative, showcases virtues such as compassion, humility, patience, and self-giving love—where each of these virtues is not abstractly taught but concretely lived out in his interactions with others, his approach to societal norms, and his responses to the marginalised and the outcast. This concrete living out of virtues makes Christ the exemplar in the exemplarist sense—an individual who is most admirable. Hence, Christ's life and death serve as the grounding for virtues that are not merely to be admired but to be emulated, thus spreading goodness throughout the world. That is, Christ lived an exemplary life, that displayed virtues in a way that was both profoundly admirable and radically transformative. Through his actions, teachings, and ultimate sacrifice, Christ exemplified the full spectrum of moral virtues that humanity is called to embody.

Christ's role as a moral exemplar is closely connected with the concept of Israel as a royal priesthood and its journey of returning from exile. That is, Israel's vocation, as described in the Scriptures, was to be a nation of priests, a community that would mediate between God and the world, reflecting God's love and justice to creation and vice versa. However, the narrative of the Scriptures suggests that Israel faltered in this vocation, leading to their exile. However, this exile was not just a physical displacement but also a spiritual one—a separation from their identity and purpose as God's chosen people. Within this narrative framework, Jesus emerges as the one who fulfils this vocation perfectly. He becomes the true image-bearer, the ultimate royal priest who not only models the way to live in right relationship with God, others, and

creation but also breaks the chains of idolatry and sin that had led to exile. Through his life and teachings, Jesus provided a living example of what it meant to fulfil this divine vocation. That is, the exemplarist theory emphasises that understanding what it means to be good, compassionate, or humble comes not from theoretical descriptions but from looking at how Jesus lived these virtues. This is that Jesus' life provides a narrative that people can relate to, learn from, and emulate in their own lives. Moreover, the exemplarist approach posits that moral concepts are grounded in the emotion of reflective admiration. In the case of Jesus, this admiration is evoked in others by the way Jesus lived—his ability to show love to those who were unloved, to offer forgiveness where others sought revenge, and to live a life of service rather than domination, all elicit admiration and serve as a direct reference for these moral virtues. However, this admiration is not superficial but reflective, as it involves an engagement with the depth and complexity of Jesus' character and actions. Jesus' teachings also play a crucial role in the exemplarist framework. That is, Jesus' parables, sermons, and sayings are not just moral instructions but are invitations to understand and participate in a way of life that reflects the virtues he embodies. For instance, the Beatitudes are not just blessings but a portrayal of the virtues that characterise the kingdom of God. Through these teachings, Jesus provides concrete examples of how to live out the virtues he exemplifies. Moreover, Jesus' crucifixion is to be seen as the ultimate act of priesthood, offering himself as a sacrifice for the sake of others, embodying the self-giving love that is the heart of God's kingdom—with the resurrection of Jesus thus being viewed as the vindication of his life and death, signifying that the world had indeed changed, that the exile was over, and that the vocation of being image bearers and a royal priesthood was renewed and restored. That is, it is the death of Christ that further amplifies his role as the ultimate exemplar. In his willingness to suffer and die, he models the virtue of self-giving love—placing the good of others above one's own life. This act of sacrifice is seen as admirable not only for its selflessness but also for its redemptive value. That is, it is a death that carries profound meaning, symbolising the defeat of sin and the possibility of reconciliation with God. As such, it provides a model of how one can confront the most profound evils and sufferings of the world with a spirit of love and self-giving. That is, Jesus' death becomes a central reference point, a concrete example of moral virtue in action—as the way Jesus faced death—with compassion, forgiveness, and self-sacrifice—provides a vivid illustration of these virtues in their purest form. This direct reference to Jesus allows individuals to grasp the essence of these virtues more profoundly than any descriptive explanation could provide. The power of Jesus' death in the exemplarist framework lies in its ability to, like his life, evoke reflective admiration in others. This admiration is not a passive acknowledgement but an active engagement with the virtues displayed by Jesus.

That is, it compels individuals to internalise and emulate these virtues in their lives. Just as we understand the concept of “water” through direct reference to actual instances of water, we understand the concepts of self-giving love and forgiveness by referring to Jesus’ actions during his crucifixion. Hence, by looking to Jesus as the exemplar, individuals find a concrete and relatable model of virtue. However, this model is not static; rather, it is dynamic and adaptable to different contexts and times. As people reflect on Jesus’ life and death, they continuously reinterpret and apply these virtues in their lives, making morality a lived experience rather than a set of rules. That is, instead of viewing virtues as distant ideals, individuals see them embodied in a person they can relate to and admire. This personal connection fosters a deeper commitment to these virtues and a more profound transformation of character. That is, when individuals encounter the narrative of Christ’s life and death, they are moved not only by the moral teachings but also by the person behind them—the one who lived out those teachings to their fullest extent. The admiration that arises from this encounter is what Zagzebski describes as reflective admiration. It’s reflective because it involves a deep consideration of the character and actions of the exemplar, and its admiration because it elicits a desire to emulate those virtues in one’s own life. Hence, as individuals seek to emulate Christ, they participate in spreading the goodness that he embodied. This emulation is not a mere imitation but an internalisation of the virtues that Christ represents. As more individuals live out these virtues, the collective character of communities and societies is transformed. This transformation reflects the divine to the world in a way that Israel was called to do as a “royal priesthood” and a light to the nations.” The role of Israel, to embody and reflect God’s character to the world, finds its fulfilment in Christ, who perfectly embodies this vocation. By emulating Christ, individuals and communities take up this role, becoming bearers of God’s image themselves. The goodness that spreads through their emulation of Christ’s virtues is not just personal moral improvement but a participation in the divine mission of reflecting God’s love and justice to the world. Thus, the exemplarism found in Christ’s life and death is not only a model for individual morality but also a catalyst for the restoration of humanity’s original vocation as image bearers, entrusted with the task of co-creating a world that reflects the goodness of God. Thus, through Jesus’ life and death, and through his followers who admired and emulated his virtues, the world was and continues to be transformed. As individuals and communities reflect Jesus’ virtues in their own lives, they participate in the making of a good world, furthering the revolution he began—a world characterised by the values of the kingdom of God, such as love, justice, and peace. The exemplarist thesis argues that this is precisely how morality is best grounded and disseminated. Not through a rigid code that dictates behaviour from above, but through the stories and lives of exemplars

like Jesus, who inspire and draw others into a moral and virtuous way of living. In this way, morality becomes not just a set of rules to follow but a dynamic, lived reality that is continually reshaped and enriched by the lives of those who embody its ideals. Jesus, as the exemplar, invites humanity into a shared vocation of restoring and reflecting the goodness of God's creation, thus contributing to the making of a good world.

Jesus' life and death thus launched a revolution that redefined the world's moral landscape, providing a living exemplar that others could emulate.

Through exemplarism, the EGP that plagues the Revolution Account is addressed by providing a clear mechanism through which Jesus' life and death effect change: through emulation. That is, individuals observe and reflect on Jesus' life, and they are inspired to embody the virtues he demonstrated. This emulation is a dynamic process, where individuals continually interpret and apply these virtues in their own lives, leading to personal and communal transformation. Thus, one has a concrete model in Jesus for how moral virtues are to be understood and lived out. This approach shows that the transformative power of Jesus' life and death lies in their ability to inspire emulation, leading to a revolution characterised by the values of the kingdom of God. It's a revolution that begins at the personal level but has far-reaching implications, reshaping societies and cultures by the virtues embodied in the life and death of Jesus. Thus, the life and death of Jesus, as seen through the lens of exemplarism, provide a robust framework for understanding the revolutionary change that the Revolution Account describes. More fully, in a world described as being in bondage to sin and idolatry, the emulation of Christ's life and virtues presents a pathway to transform both individuals and the collective society, and thus thereby addressing the pervasive darkness. That is, Jesus' life as an exemplar, the virtues exemplified by his death, provides a concrete model for living morally good lives, which are essential in the endeavour of creating a good world—which goes beyond mere adherence to moral laws, but, rather involves a transformation of character and actions in line with the virtues Jesus embodied. As individuals reflect on and emulate the compassion, humility, patience, and self-giving love demonstrated by Jesus, they themselves become exemplars of these virtues. This process is crucial in overcoming the darkness of sin and idolatry, as it fosters a society where individuals actively embody and promote goodness. Moreover, the role of each person in this transformation is significant, due to the fact that, within the exemplarist perspective, the responsibility for moral foundation is not just a top-down imposition from divine laws but also a bottom-up process where individuals contribute to shaping the moral fabric of the world. Hence, by living lives that mirror the virtues of Christ, individuals take on the role of "image bearers" on Earth—which is not a passive reflection but an active participation in spreading the values of the kingdom of God. And the collective impact of

individuals living as exemplars of Christ's virtues would be profound—as it would lead to a societal shift where the principles of love, justice, and peace, as taught and lived by Jesus, become the guiding forces. And one can thus say that this societal transformation is the essence of the revolution that the Revolution Account proposes— a shift from a world bound by sin and idolatry to one that reflects the goodness and love of God. In this light, the “good world” that emerges is not just an abstract ideal, but a concrete reality shaped by the lives of those who follow Christ's example. It's a world where the defeat of evil and the fulfilment of the role of image-bearers become achievable through the collective emulation of the virtues of Jesus. This revolution, initiated by Jesus and perpetuated by his followers, thus has the power to transform the world into a place where the presence and character of God are reflected in every aspect of human life—a world where each person, renewed by Christ's revolutionary work, becomes an agent of change, furthering the good by living lives that mirror the virtues exemplified by Christ. Taking all of these things into account, we can now finally state our elucidated version of the Revolution Account as such:

(7) (Revolution*)

Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, a revolutionary change was enacted within the world:

- (i) *Individual Revelation:* At an individual level, Christ's totally perfect empathy with all conscious individuals enables him to be a representative substitute for the sins of humanity, to defeat all of the evil forces through his death on the cross and be resurrected to enable all humans internally experience the new creation.
- (ii) *Global Revolution:* At a global level, by Christ living an exemplary life, and expressing certain virtues through his death, humans are able to, through reflective admiration, emulate Christ, and thus become exemplars themselves, which will contribute to spreading goodness around the world and ultimately thus transform the world from a darkened world to a good world.

The transformative impact of the life, death, and resurrect of Jesus is conceptualised, within the precisified form of the Revolution Account, as a

revolutionary change that operates on both individual and global levels. At the individual level, the revolution is rooted in the notion of Christ's total empathy. This empathy is far more than a mere understanding of human experiences—it is a perfect, all-encompassing identification with the conscious experiences of every individual. Christ, through his life and particularly through his sacrificial death, becomes a representative substitute for humanity's sins, and the means of ultimately defeating the evil forces. And his subsequent resurrection is not just a symbol of triumph over death but serves as a means for individuals to experience a profound internal transformation, described as the "new creation." This new creation is about spiritual renewal, where due to the fact that in Christ's death, all humanity "spiritually dies", ceasing to possess their sin-afflicted minds and wills, and with his resurrection, they are offered a new mind and will, created in Christ's life and shaped by his responses of love, faith, and hope. This transformative event enables individuals to replace their tainted cognitive structures with Christ's, embracing a cognitive structure directed towards the good and thus ultimately altering their relationship with God and the world. Simultaneously, on a global scale, the revolution initiated by Jesus is characterised by his exemplary life. The virtues he embodied and expressed, particularly through his death, serve as a model for humanity. This, however, is not about mere imitation but about transformative emulation. That is, by reflecting on and admiring Christ's virtues, individuals are inspired to internalise these qualities, leading to a transformation in their character and actions. This individual transformation has a ripple effect, contributing to a broader societal change. As more people strive to emulate Christ, they become beacons of goodness, influencing others and spreading transformative values around the world. This collective shift is conceptualised as a movement from a world steeped in darkness, marked by sin, idolatry and separation from God to a world of goodness, aligned with the principles of love, justice, and peace. Hence, it is a global revolution that seeks to reshape the world, not just in moral terms but in its fundamental nature, grounded upon the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

Hence, the revolutionary change brought about by the person and work of Christ is a complex relationship of personal transformation and global reformation. The Revolution Account thus brings together the spiritual renewal of individuals with the moral and ethical transformation of societies, envisioning a world profoundly altered by the life and teachings of Christ. The Revolution Account thus brings together the spiritual renewal of individuals with the moral and ethical transformation of societies, envisioning a world profoundly altered by the life and teachings of Christ. In this transformative vision, the life, death and resurrection of Christ mark not only an individual revolution but also a global one that is best conceptualised as a new Exodus that is a return from exile (brought about by sin) brings about the new creation characterised by the defeat

of evil, a restored relationship with God and the ultimate fulfilment of their vocation as image bearers of God.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the article focuses on analysing the revolutionary impact of Jesus Christ's life. Death and resurrection, as conceptualised by the Revolution Account. It first delves into the philosophical aspects of his transformative personhood, exploring the nature of his incarnate life. Following this, it examines the revolutionary work of Christ, incorporating the concepts of personal presence and exemplarism to explain the mechanisms behind its transformative effectiveness at an individual and global level. Through this philosophical and theological exploration, the article addresses how Christ's life, death and resurrection have instigated a revolution, transforming not just individual lives but also effecting profound change at a global level.

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